

# Technician Commitment

## Invitation to Tender

This specification invites tenders for a research study that will facilitate an evaluative review of the Technician Commitment to ensure the Technician Commitment process is fit for purpose for advancing visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability of technical skills, roles and careers in UK higher education and research institutions and is delivering on what it was set up to do.

### Tender Information

**Background:** Launched in 2017, the Technician Commitment offers a framework for taking a strategic approach to ensuring status and opportunity for technicians working in UK higher education and research institutions. The vision of the Technician Commitment is *“a culture where technical careers are recognised, respected, supported, developed and aspired to as professional careers in higher education and research institutes”*.

To fulfil this vision the Technician Commitment, together with signatories and supporters, will:

- coordinate, drive and evaluate collective action across the higher education and research sector to ensure visibility, recognition, opportunity and sustainability for/of technical roles and skills
- work to ensure that technicians are motivated, engaged and proud to be technicians and that others aspire to technical careers in the higher education and research sector
- influence policy pertaining to technical roles and careers in the higher education and research
- advocate technical skills and careers in higher education and research and be a nationally recognised source of sector expertise

The Technician Commitment launched in May 2017 and now stands at 91 university and research institute signatories, along with UKRI (announced as a signatory in February 2020) and a number of supporter organisations.

The Technician Commitment is funded by the Gatsby Foundation and hosted by the Science Council. It is led by a Steering Board of sector stakeholder organisations. The Steering Board is informed of activity at signatory organisations through the submission of institutional self-assessments and action plans. There is evidence in these documents of new understanding, initiatives and opportunities of/for the technical communities within their organisations, as a direct consequence of the Technician Commitment. To complement the institutional self-assessments, and to build a broader understanding of the impact of the Technician Commitment, the Steering Board is keen to gain insights directly from colleagues at signatory institutions, particularly the technician community, to ensure that the effect of these activities is being felt ‘on the ground’. In a recent paper to the Gatsby Foundation, the Steering Board committed to undertake an evaluation of the Technician Commitment programme from this perspective.

The Steering Board are therefore seeking to commission a piece of work to evaluate the impact of the early years of the Technician Commitment and to ensure the Commitment is delivering progress towards its vision to influence culture change for the technical community. A sub-group of the Steering Board has been formed to guide this piece of work.

**The Research:** The Technician Commitment Steering Board wishes to commission an independent review, seeking to:

- explore whether the Technician Commitment is making a positive difference to the visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability of technicians working in UK higher education and research institutions.
- explore the experiences of signatory institutions in engaging with the Technician Commitment.
- establish a baseline for future reviews of the impact of the Technician Commitment.
- identify any areas where the processes or practice of the Technician Commitment need to be improved.

It is anticipated the research will investigate the following key aspects:

- Sector visibility, profile and impact of the Technician Commitment.
- The work and activities of signatory and supporter institutions in response to the Technician Commitment.
- The experiences and views of technicians in signatory organisations and their views on the effectiveness of the Technician Commitment.
- The self-assessment, action plan and peer review process.

**Methodology:** It is anticipated that the research will consist of mixed methods involving interviews, focus groups and surveys with signatory and supporter institutions. The research will follow on from an initial report published in November 2018 ('The Technician Commitment: One Year In') on the first year of the initiative's activity and it should be undertaken between October 2020 and June 2021 with the final report and recommendations completed by early June 2021. The Technician Commitment Steering Board invites candidates to outline a proposed methodology for delivering the research within the allotted timeframe which will be used to assist selection. Although at this stage there is flexibility in how the research is conducted, it is envisaged that the research process will encompass the following:

- Contact with Technician Commitment leads at signatory institutions who can help set up arrangements for interviews.
- Contact with key sector stakeholders and supporting organisations.
- Desk research to collate and review submissions and action plans from participating organisations (this will be provided).
- Qualitative field research with staff at signatory institutions incorporating surveys, interviews and focus group conducted online/remotely (with a possibility of some face to face, if permitted by government guidelines).

The researcher(s) will need to consider issues of confidentiality for each participating institution in terms of the production and dissemination of this research study findings. Furthermore, issues of staff confidentiality will need to be carefully considered to ensure an appropriate ethical response in relation to participant anonymity. If desk-based research and collecting secondary quantitative/qualitative data is undertaken then data-sharing agreements with signatory institutions will be required.

In relation to the qualitative field research, the researcher(s) will need to adopt an inclusive and accessible methodological approach, recognising the diversity of the staff population and the importance of collecting input from across the spectrum of experiences and opinions. The project should engage, as far as possible, all applicable institutions. The researcher(s) will need to agree the research methods with the Technician Commitment Steering Board.

**Outputs:** The researcher(s) will be expected to produce a range of outputs. Interim outputs will include regularly reporting to the Technician Commitment Steering Board on progress. The appointed researcher(s) should allow for up to six meetings with the Technician Commitment Programme Director to agree strategy and monitor progress. The final research outputs will include a report to the Technician Commitment Steering Board providing an overview of the findings and recommendations. The Steering Board potentially sees the report including:

- A summary of the impact of the Technician Commitment, at individual institutions and across the wider sector.
- Good practice examples of how signatory institutions engage with the Technician Commitment.
- An evaluation of the Technician Commitment and its processes to ensure that it is fit for purpose, and user friendly in the current climate.
- Recommendations for amendments/revisions/improvements in order for the Technician Commitment to improve its impact and advance progress towards its vision.

A version of the report will be externally published. Therefore, in addition, the report submitted to the Technician Commitment Steering Board will need to be adapted for an external audience made up of Technician Commitment Signatory and Supporter institutions and the wider higher education and research sector. The production of the report should be prepared in close liaison with the Technician Commitment's Programme Director. Furthermore, the researcher(s) may need to present the research findings and recommendations at dissemination events as agreed by the Technician Commitment Steering Board of which will be a maximum of 2 events.

All data collected by the researcher(s) during the course of the research shall be passed to the Technician Commitment Steering Board at the conclusion of the project and any copies of said data, or related analysis, held by the researcher(s), are to be destroyed at this point.

**Outcome:** The research will provide recommendations of how the Technician Commitment could be improved and revised in order for it to be as practicable and supportive as possible for the higher education and research sector. The outcomes of this research will therefore contribute to the future development and direction of the Technician Commitment and enhance the support available to participating organisations.

## Tender Requirements

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

- candidate or organisation details including name, legal status, full contact details and lead contact.
- details or CVs of staff who will undertake the work and a clear breakdown of how much time each person will contribute to the project.
- details of data security arrangement and compliance with data protection legislation.
- details of the approach that will be taken with regards the collection of personal data.
- details of professional experience and expertise relevant to the project, including any experience gained in the HE and research sector and/or in the evaluation of similar programmes.
- samples of other pieces of work which are similar in focus, scope and tone to the project.
- reasons for interest in undertaking the work.
- any other details considered relevant.
- proposed approach and methodology to deliver the project, including:
  - suggested timetable for the work, including key milestones and clear timescales for completing the project.
  - details of how you will work closely with Technician Commitment, the institutions involved in the project and the Steering Board.
  - details of any potential or actual sensitivities involved in undertaking the work and how they will be managed.
- details of how you will attract relevant participants to be involved in the project.
- risk assessment of the proposed approach and how the risks will be mitigated.
- outline of quality assurance processes.
- schedule of all costs including a detailed breakdown of how costs will be allocated in terms of staff hours, expenses, VAT (if applicable) etc.
- outline of the candidate or organisation's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- details of any claims of unlawful discrimination upheld against the candidate by any court or employment tribunal in the last three years.
- Details of any outstanding claims of litigation against the candidate.
- Details of the candidate's insurer, the policy numbers, extent of cover, and expiry dates in respect of public liability and professional indemnity insurance.
- Details of any potential or actual conflicts of interest.
- The name and contact details for two referees for whom the candidate has recently worked (within the past five years only) are to be provided.

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

- list the members of the consortium.
- identify the lead member and contact.

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

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

Reasonable adjustments: The Technician Commitment Steering Board will consider reasonable adjustments as requested.

## Fees

The total amount available for this work, including all fees and expenses is up to £15,000 including VAT. This includes all expenses related to the project, including giving presentations at any sector dissemination events. The printing costs of any final publication, and the costs of any dissemination events or conferences, will be borne by the Technician Commitment.

The preference is to pay for the work in three stages: a payment of 40% on signing the contract; a second payment of 40% at an interim point of the research (to be agreed); and a final payment of 20% on receipt of the final report. Payments will be made on submission of an invoice.

The Technician Commitment wishes to agree a fixed price for the work.

In calculating the fee, account should be taken of the fact that the Technician Commitment is funded and hosted by registered charities and non-profit making bodies.

The Technician Commitment Steering Board is not bound to accept the lowest priced tender and shall not be bound to accept the contractor as a sole supplier.

## Tender Submission

Please return one email copy of your tender, in English, with the following subject line "Tender documents enclosed" to: Kelly Vere ([k.ver@sciencecouncil.org](mailto:k.ver@sciencecouncil.org)). One email copy of your submission should arrive by no later than 12 noon, Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September. The Technician Commitment Steering Board has the right to disqualify any candidates who submit incomplete or late tenders.

## Further Information

For further details, please contact Carly Dellar: ([carly.dellar@gatsby.org.uk](mailto:carly.dellar@gatsby.org.uk)).

The Technician Commitment Steering Board will respond to all reasonable requests for clarification of any aspect of this Invitation to Tender documents as soon as is reasonably possible.

## Selection Criteria

In awarding the contract, The Technician Commitment Steering Board will consider the balance between the quality of the tender and value for money, taking account of the factors listed in this Invitation to Tender document and in particular the proposed methodology.

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

- relevant experience and research credibility, including publications and track record in managing credible and significant research.
- knowledge and understanding of the higher education and research sector.
- appropriateness of the proposed methodology in terms of credible and robust research.
- feasibility of completing the proposed programme of work to a high quality within the specific timetable.
- understanding of the need to work closely with the Technician Commitment team throughout the project.
- risk mitigation.
- overall value for money.

## Timing

This project should be undertaken between November 2020 and June 2021. The candidate should note the following key dates:

- Deadline for receipt of tenders: 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 at 12 noon.
- Interviews of short-listed candidates if required, to be conducted by video call w/c 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020.
- Award of tender to successful candidate: +2 days from interview date.
- Review Meeting One: December 2020.
- Review Meeting Two: February 2021.
- Interim Report submitted by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.
- Review Meeting Three: April 2021.
- Draft Final Report submitted by 15<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
- Final Report submitted by 12 noon 15<sup>th</sup> June 2021

The Technician Commitment Steering Board reserves the right to interview shortlisted applicants.

The dates set out in this paragraph are provisional only and may be altered by the Technician Commitment Steering Board at its discretion.

**Reporting Responsibilities:** The successful candidate will report to Kelly Vere, Programme Director, Technician Commitment.

#### Confidentiality Statement and Disclaimer

The information contained in this Invitation to Tender and all other information made available at any time to the candidates by and on behalf of the Technician Commitment Steering Board 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 document 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 Technician Commitment Steering Board with any third party.

The Technician Commitment Steering Board reserves the right not to follow this Invitation to Tender in any way and/or to withdraw from or amend the procurement process. The Technician Commitment may reimburse expenses incurred by candidates in attending interviews as part of the selection process on request.

The Technician Commitment Steering Board reserves the right, without prior notice and in its absolute discretion, to change or terminate the tendering procedure for the project, including requesting additional information, at any time before signing the contract with the successful candidate.