

NU-2100 Appendix 1 – Technical Requirements – Creative Employer Skills Survey

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC), referred to as the ‘Authority’ in this document, is commissioning a business survey, known publicly as the *Creative Employer Skills Survey (CESS)*, and referred to as the ‘study’ in this document, to understand current and future skills needs of the creative industries and their constituent sub-sectors.
- 1.2. The Creative Employer Skills Survey will provide new evidence to inform a skills audit process for the UK’s creative industries, being jointly led by Work Advance Ltd, referred to as the ‘Project Lead’ in this document, in partnership with the Creative PEC, on behalf of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Creative Industries Council (CIC). This is expected to provide valuable insight to inform the UK Government’s Industrial Strategy and Creative Industries Sector Plan, expected to be published in the Spring of 2025.
- 1.3. The Creative PEC is led by Newcastle University with the Royal Society of Arts and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). It provides independent research and policy recommendations for the UK’s creative industries and has extensive experience of commissioning and running creative industries business surveys, e.g. a creative industries employers skills survey, a firm survey of CreaTech businesses and Tech businesses in other sectors, and the three-wave longitudinal Creative Radar survey. More information on the Creative PEC can be found [here](#).
- 1.4. Work Advance Ltd is an independent research and advisory practice specialising in understanding developments in the world of work and informing policies, programmes and practices that support inclusive growth; productive businesses; better management practices; and a skilled, agile and healthy workforce. Work Advance are research consortium partners for the Creative PEC’s State of the Nations series on creative education, skills and talent. They have extensive experience in designing and running employer surveys. This includes the conception and design of the Employer Skills Survey and Employer Perspectives Survey more than a decade ago and most recently the Be the Business Productivity Baseline Survey, ScreenSkills Forecasting Service Employer Survey, and Be the Business Manufacturing Productivity Survey. More information on Work Advance can be found [here](#).
- 1.5. Given rapid developments in the policy landscape, we are seeking a survey supplier able to deliver this work quickly. The intention is to develop the underpinning questionnaire, cognitively test and launch the mainstage survey in January/February 2025. The survey fieldwork is expected to be completed by May 2025. We encourage bidders to set out the measures and project management processes they will implement to ensure successful delivery within the compressed timescales for the study.
- 1.6. The Creative PEC will also be launching its Creative Business Panel (CBP) in January 2025: a five-wave longitudinal online survey of senior leaders which will track firm behaviours and performance within the creative industries. The CESS is designed to complement the CBP by providing an in-depth look at the skills needs, challenges and priorities of creative businesses, to shape reforms to the skills system being driven by the new UK government. The successful bidder will need to consider the positioning of this survey: its look and feel, the questionnaire design, and sample management will need to be closely aligned to maximise synergies and minimize survey fatigue. Subject to final confirmation, participants in the CBP will be asked to provide contact details for the hiring manager within their organization to participate in the CESS. Survey providers may be expected to liaise with the organization undertaking CBP, to promote consistency and alignment, where appropriate.

2. Objectives

- 2.1. The purpose of the study is to provide detailed insight on the current and future skills needs of employers in the creative industries. It is designed to offer more up to date and granular information than is currently available from official sources, such as the Department for Education’s Employer Skills Survey (see [here](#)). In addition to understanding what job roles and skills are in greatest demand, the study will explore how skills needs are expected to change over the next 3-5 years, the key drivers of changing skills needs, evidence of skills shortages and gaps, and the impact of these on creative

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firms. The survey will also include a small number of questions exploring employer perspectives of, and engagement with, the skills system.

- 2.2. Data from the Creative Employer Skills Survey (CESS) will be used to inform a wider skills audit process being led by Creative PEC and Work Advance on behalf of DCMS and the CIC. The skills audit process is, in turn, being used to shape planned reforms to the skills system under the new UK Government.

3. Scope of requirements

- 3.1. The study will include both commercial creative industries businesses and not-for-profit organisations (e.g. charities and social enterprises) that operate in the sector (e.g., museums, galleries, performing arts venues). The survey should be sampled at the establishment level (individual sites/workplaces) rather than enterprise level (whole organisations). Sampling considerations should also be given to size, sub-sector, nation and region.
- 3.2. The Authority expects this survey to be conducted by telephone and completed by hiring managers within creative organisations.
- 3.3. The study should be representative of the following nine sub-sectors that make up the DCMS's classification of creative industries: advertising and marketing; architecture; crafts; design; screen; IT, software, and computer services (including video games); museums, galleries and libraries; music, performing and visual arts; and publishing. Creative sub-sectors are defined based on 4-digit SIC codes as set out by DCMS [here](#).
- 3.4. In order to achieve the objectives of the study the successful bidder will be expected to deliver the outputs described in the sections below.

4. Research methodology

- 4.1. Bidders are expected to adopt a phased approach to the study as below.
 - Phase 1: Questionnaire development & programming** in collaboration with the Project Lead and with input from the Authority.
 - Phase 2: Quantitative survey testing & set-up**, including cognitive testing but excluding piloting.
 - Phase 3: Quantitative survey mainstage**, completing telephone interviews.
 - Phase 4: Data cleaning, quality assurance & analysis**, including the production of raw data tables and navigable survey tables, but excluding any written reporting.
- 4.2. Further information on the requirements of each stage is provided below. Bidders are expected to set out a detailed methodology for achieving the study objectives, associated costs and delivery schedule.

5. Phase 1: Questionnaire development & programming

- 5.1. The Project Lead will develop a draft questionnaire, in consultation with the Authority, DCMS, the CIC and (where appropriate) wider industry stakeholders, in advance of the award of the contract stemming from the ITT. This questionnaire will be shared with the chosen supplier on appointment.
- 5.2. The survey is expected to be approximately 15 minutes in length, which will be sufficient to cover the topic of interest while also ensuring a high response rate.
- 5.3. To enable benchmarking of the data collected, the survey questionnaire will include a small number of questions used in existing business surveys, particularly the Employer Skills Survey.
- 5.4. The questionnaire is expected to include a small number (c.5) of open-ended questions, particularly when examining the specific job roles or skills where shortages or gaps are most acute.
- 5.5. The successful bidder will be expected to develop the final survey questionnaire, based on the Project Lead's draft, for review and, subsequent to sign-off from the Authority and Project Lead, Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) programming.

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6. Phases 2 and 3: Quantitative survey testing & set-up, & mainstage

- 6.1. Discussion of study design and the successful bidder's approach should include detailed consideration and clear recommendations concerning the source(s) of the sample frame for the survey. Any associated third-party data costs must be included in bidders' costings.
- 6.2. The successful bidder will need to allow for a process of validation of the survey sample with trade bodies representing each creative sub-sector. This is because creative activities are not always fully captured or correctly coded to Standard Industries Classification (SIC) codes. This is a tried and tested approach to improving the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the sample frame, which the Authority has recently successfully implemented for a different employer survey. To preserve data confidentiality, this will be undertaken for company names and assigned SIC codes only. Industry stakeholders will validate and augment the list for their respective sub-sector. This process will be coordinated by the Project Lead and bidders should allow for a one-week review window in their project delivery schedule.
- 6.3. The Authority and Project Lead will work with the successful bidder to design pre-survey communications to promote engagement with the survey and to ensure that it is answered by the person in the organisation best placed to provide relevant responses in relation to the topics outlined in 2.1. It is anticipated that this will include: communication materials to build awareness of the survey amongst creative businesses; a web-based landing page where creative businesses can register their interest in participation; and an initial recruitment letter or email introducing the survey and inviting participation. Bidders should make provision for the development of these materials in their ITT responses. Once project delivery is underway, all materials should be developed in line with Creative PEC's brand guidelines, which will be supplied. Bidders should also note that industry trade bodies have committed to promote the survey widely to their membership base, and that any communications specifically concerning the Creative Employer Skills Survey are permitted to use the branding of the Creative PEC, DCMS and the CIC.
- 6.4. Bidders should set out plans for small-scale cognitive testing, to ensure the survey is well-understood and correctly interpreted by businesses in the creative industries. Given the timescales for the study, the Authority does not expect the survey will be piloted before progressing to mainstage.
- 6.5. Bids should provide details of the briefing, training and any other resources that will be provided to interviewers, to ensure a high-quality interviewing team that will maximise response rates and completion rates.
- 6.6. Bidders should set out their proposed study design, how this will achieve the required sub-sector analysis and give confidence in the statistical representativeness of the population. Consideration should be given to the potential to analyse survey findings by sub-groups (e.g. by size, nation, region etc). Bidders can refer to *DCMS and Digital Economic Estimates: Business Demographics, 2023* for sector business demographics.
- 6.7. Bids should detail the anticipated achievable sample size given the available budget and timescales for the study. This should include information on expected response rates and highlight measures that will be implemented to ensure successful completion of the fieldwork within the timescales set out in section 8.

7. Phase 4: Data cleaning, quality assurance & analysis

- 7.1. Bidders should detail the quality assurance techniques that will be used to ensure robustness and reliability of the data tables.
- 7.2. Bidders should confirm whether they have the capacity and experience to code a small number of open-ended questions to standard classifications and should include separate costs for this activity within the Pricing Schedule. This could include, for example, coding job roles identified as subject to skills shortages or gaps to the extended Standard Occupational Classification 2020 using the ONS' Computer Assisted Structured Coding Tool CASCOT ([here](#)). There is also interest in the scope to code

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open-ended questions concerning the types of skills in greatest demand or short supply to the Standard Skills Classification currently being developed by Sheffield University on behalf of the Department for Education.

- 7.3. The Project Lead will work with the successful bidder to develop the specification for the navigable Excel survey tables. This could, for example, include cross tabulations of each variable (one per worksheet) by sub-sector and other characteristics (e.g., size, nation, region etc.); a small number (c.5) summary sheets grouping findings thematically; an indexed contents page; and hyperlinks throughout. Raw (uncoded) outputs from the open-ended questions could also feature as separate worksheets or workbooks.
- 7.4. The successful bidder will be required to provide:
- Data tables (csv)
 - Navigable Excel survey tables, developed to the agreed specification (xlsx)
 - A technical report. This will include, but not be limited to, details of the methodology, e.g. sampling, weighting, full survey design, instructions for interviewers (etc)

8. Project outputs and deliverables

- 8.1. The successful bidder will be responsible for producing the following outputs and deliverables, with all expected to have undergone relevant QA testing.

Output/ Deliverable	Required Date
Phase 1: Questionnaire development & programming - Final questionnaire - CATI programming	By Friday 31 st January 2025
Phase 2: Quantitative survey testing & set-up - Sample procured - Cognitive testing of quantitative survey - Interviewer training	By Friday 7 th Feb 2025
Phase 3: Quantitative survey mainstage - Fieldwork begins - Fieldwork ends	Between Monday 10 th February 2025 – Friday 23 rd May 2025
Phase 4: Data cleaning, quality assurance & analysis - Quality assured data tables in CSV format - Navigable Excel survey tables (xlsx) - Technical report	By Friday 6 th June 2025

- 8.2. The successful bidder is expected to follow the timeline outlined in the table above in order to deliver the outputs/deliverables described in sections 4, 5, 6, and 7. Whilst this is the expected timeline, bidders can suggest minor adjustments, so long as the rationale is fully explained and satisfactory reassurances are provided that overall delivery will not be impeded, with the entire project still to be completed by Friday 6th June 2025. Bidders are reminded, however, that the Authority is working to a very tight schedule and proposals that meet the expected timeline will be at a clear advantage.
- 8.3. The successful bidder will be required to undertake appropriate QA of all outputs/deliverables and guarantee their accuracy to the satisfaction of the Authority.

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- 8.4. Bidders are required to provide full details of the QA processes they intend to use during delivery of the study, including those already in place.

9. Service levels and performance

- 9.1. The Authority will measure the quality of the successful bidder's delivery by:
- Ability to respond to all queries within two working days. For example, in responding to emails, providing project updates, and supplying ad-hoc data and project information
 - Ability to achieve key milestones. Key milestones will be agreed between the Project Lead, the Authority and the successful bidder during the project inception meeting.
 - Timelines and effectiveness of the successful bidder to adopt and implement feedback from the Project Lead.
- 9.2. Key milestones are material to the study and contract, and on-time delivery will be of the essence.

10. Project management

- 10.1. The successful bidder is required to appoint a Project Manager, responsible for all components of the study. This person must have sufficient experience, seniority, and time allocated, to manage the study effectively. This person will work closely with the Project Lead. The Authority will also appoint a contract manager who will monitor performance, project outputs and deliverables.
- 10.2. The importance of this research means there will be significant input from the Project Board and Steering Group for the wider skills audit process. This will be coordinated by the Project Lead and will be incorporated into project management meetings with the successful bidder.
- 10.3. It is proposed that a project initiation meeting should be held immediately after signing of the contract governing delivery of the study. After this, it is expected that regular contact will be maintained between the successful bidder and the Project Lead through video calls and emails. The frequency and modes of contact will be agreed at the project initiation meeting.
- 10.4. The successful bidder will be required on a weekly basis to provide a written update on the study's progress to the Project Lead and the Authority. These updates should flag any emerging issues and risks related to delivery, confirm the steps being taken to achieve key milestones and outline quality assurance measures (as and when applicable). While the survey is in field, the progress updates should include key progress indicators, including the number and breakdown of completed and scheduled interviews.

11. Challenges and risks

- 11.1. Bidders are required to identify and assess the challenges and risks associated with undertaking the study and propose how these will be mitigated and/or overcome.
- 11.2. The successful bidder will develop and manage a full risk register, which will be reviewed at project update meetings, as necessary.

12. Data security

- 12.1. The successful bidder will be required to implement appropriate arrangements for data security at all times. Such arrangements must meet the standards expected by the Authority, especially Newcastle University (the contracting body and host of Creative PEC), and outlined in the framework terms and conditions, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. At all times, appropriate risk management procedures must be in evidence, with entries included on the full risk register.
- 12.2. Processes should be in place for secure collection, transfer and storage of data, including that being returned by interviewees, and safeguarding against data loss, again including appropriate risk management procedures.

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- 12.3. Bidders should confirm within their bid that such arrangements and procedures will be implemented and outline the technical measures to be put in place to meet the requirements.

13. Ethical conduct

- 13.1. The successful bidder will be responsible for the ethical delivery of the study and, as such, must have a clear approach for ensuring that it will be compliant with relevant ethical codes of conduct. Bidders are required to set out any potential ethical issues presented by the study along with details of the proposed arrangements for ethical scrutiny to ensure the day-to-day management of these issues. The successful bidder will need to explain clearly how the information they generate and provide will be stored, reported and protected, and inform the Authority if this changes.
- 13.2. The successful bidder must obtain consent from participants that makes it clear that their data will be shared and used for research purposes.
- 13.3. The commissioning and management of the study should be carried out in accordance with Government GSR Ethical Assurance for Social and Behavioural Research guidance and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 13.4. Bidders are required to provide an up-to-date, comprehensive and clearly laid out Equality, Diversity and Inclusion statement or policy.

14. Location

- 14.1. The Authority is based in London and Newcastle.

15. Budget

- 15.1. The maximum budget available for this research is £99,600 (including VAT). While not the only criterion, pricing is a key element of the evaluation process.