

Partnership Management Policy

1. Scope/Introduction

This document brings together our policy and procedural approach to subcontracting [Partnership Working] with specific focus on:

i. Pre-Award Activities

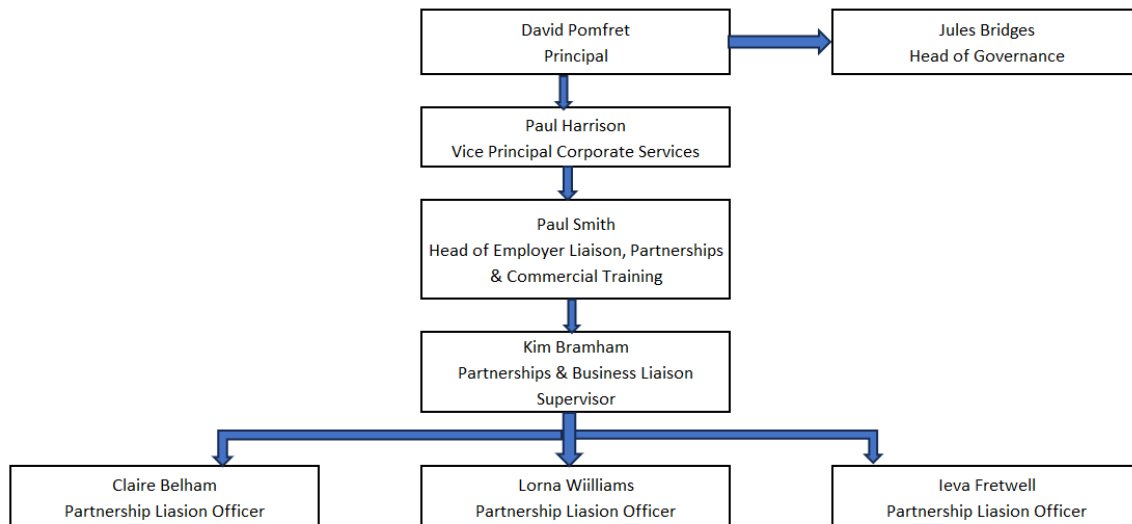
- ❖ Identification/scoping of need for subcontracting
- ❖ Process to set out the objectives and detailed requirements of the proposed partnership

ii. Contract Award & Management

- ❖ Development of contract specification
- ❖ Contract management planning
- ❖ Quality Assurance/Inspection
- ❖ Management of Cessation
- ❖ Efficiencies and Cost Control

iii. Our partnership arrangements at the College of West Anglia [CWA] are overseen by a dedicated and experienced team as detailed below. The Finance & General Purposes [F&GP] sub-committee of the corporation are charged to oversee and report on all aspects relating to subcontracting from a governance perspective. On a quarterly basis the Head of Employer Liaison, Partnerships & Commercial Training formally reports to F&GP on procurement, educational rationale, performance against KPIs, compliance, and review of the Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy.

iv. The Partnership team consists of a Head of Department, a supervisor and three Partnership Liaison Officers [PLOs] as shown below with the senior reporting lines and governance:



v. There are clear reporting lines and oversight of subcontracting with the Head of Department reporting to the Vice Principal Corporate Services who in turn reports to the Principal / CEO. The Head of Department briefs the Senior Management Team [SMT] monthly as a standing item on their SMT agenda, including performance [both academic and financial], quality assurance, compliance and any operational issues that could impact overall performance.

vi. All current partners [subcontractors] and any future partners will be required to meet the following criteria as a minimum on an ongoing basis:

- ❖ Align to the College’s Strategic Plan at the time of procurement and then on an ongoing annual basis as the plan is updated
- ❖ Satisfy as a minimum at least one of the ESFA’s rationale metrics for subcontracting
- ❖ Meet all procurement requirements on an ongoing basis
- ❖ Meet all due diligence requirements on an ongoing basis
- ❖ Meet or exceed all KPIs as specified in the contract
- ❖ Comply with all contractual requirements
- ❖ Comply with ESFA funding/compliance requirements as per appropriate funding stream
- ❖ Participate in Quality Assurance Audits [QAA] as specified in the contract
- ❖ Engage with all aspects relating to Further Education inspection requirements
- ❖ Manage risk to minimise any impact on learning outcomes

We have comprehensive due diligence processes to mitigate any risk with subcontracting, this includes internet searches of potential and established partners to ensure the organisations and their senior staff are not involved with any extremist organisations or other inappropriate activities.

vii. These metrics are used to initially scope and formulate the tender document which then informs the Invitation to Tender [ITT], tender questions and the detailed partner selection questionnaire. A panel including partnerships, the Procurement Officer and SMT will meet to review the applications using pre-defined criteria. Following the panel’s decision, organisations who have successfully met the specification are invited for further detailed dialogue. This will ultimately lead to the contract management and planning phase that is discussed in detail before the final version of the contract is generated and signed by all parties in advance of any enrolment/learner engagement.

2. Contract Management & Planning

i. Following satisfactory completion of the Pre-award activities a detailed phase will commence of dialogue aligned to the Work Instructions and Expectations – Partnerships Procedure LNG08 Rev 11. At this stage a dedicated PLO is assigned to the partner. As stated previously, CWA’s approach to contract planning is to formulate a draft contract that relates to the funding stream and any specific subcontracting requirements outlined in the sections below:

- ❖ Section 1 - Partners
- ❖ Section 2 - General
- ❖ Section 3 - Venue of Provision
- ❖ Section 4 - Outline of Provision
- ❖ Section 5 - Services to be provided by the Partner Provider
- ❖ Section 6 - Services to be provided by the Lead Provider
- ❖ Section 7 - Staffing
- ❖ Section 8 - Quality Assurance
- ❖ Section 9 - Payments
- ❖ Section 10 - Programme Details & Funding
- ❖ Section 11 - Meeting Arrangements

- ❖ Section 12 - Maximum Learner Numbers & Achievement Profile
 - ❖ Section 13 - Maximum Contract Value (MCV)
 - ❖ Section 14 - Failure to Secure Funds & Recovery of Funds
 - ❖ Section 15 - Termination of Agreement
 - ❖ Section 16 - Partner Provider Declaration
 - ❖ Section 17 - Signatories to this Agreement
 - ❖ Annex A - Summary of Provision of Services
 - ❖ Annex B - Agreement for Services Amendment Record
 - ❖ Annex D - Extract from Funding and Performance-management Rules 2014 to 2020 European Social Fund (ESF) Programme
 - ❖ Annex E - Data Protection [GDPR]
 - ❖ Annex F - Partner Provider Due Diligence Documentation Checklist
- ii. This drafting approach ensures each aspect of the process is shared by both parties as the contract is evolved. This progressive/iterative style ensures there are no surprises down the line and has proven itself over many years of successful subcontracting to be a sound approach. Regular formal contractual Management Meetings will take place termly at the Partners delivery site as appropriate; as with QA processes, these are risk based. Dates/times are specified in the contract for the full academic year, the following standardised elements:
- ❖ Review of Actions from Previous Meeting
 - ❖ Funding Update
 - ❖ Learner Performance
 - ❖ Safeguarding/Serious Concerns/Complaints
 - ❖ Due Diligence Processes
 - ❖ Qualification & Curriculum Offer Update
 - ❖ Finance
 - ❖ Staffing
 - ❖ Quality Assurance/Inspection
 - ❖ Policy Updates
 - ❖ Confirmation of any In-Year Changes to Section 16 of Partnership Agreement
 - ❖ Date of next meeting
- iii. Due to our standard approach of enhanced management oversight, the need for additional monitoring is negated regardless of funding stream, partner delivery model or location. Examples include 16-19 learners/SEN/High Needs/Education Health & Care Plan [EHCP]/Whole Programme/Distance.
- iv. Where apprenticeships are being subcontracted, the College will lead on the relationship with the employer with regular dialogue taking place throughout the whole apprenticeship journey, from initial engagement to conclusion of EPA and certification. Where appropriate, we will ensure apprenticeship provision is not solely delivered by the subcontractor by ensuring initial dialogue takes place between the employer, subcontractor, and ourselves to ensure delivery is fully mapped to the Standard and compliant with the funding rules.
- v. Issues relating to contract performance are discussed in Management Meetings with clear actions being agreed by all parties. In any cases where agreement cannot be resolved college senior managers will be involved with the ESFA being informed and where appropriate included in the direct dialogue. Where agreement cannot be reached a third-party resolution/mediation service will be engaged.

- vi. Our general approach to payments is specified in our Supply Chain Fees & Charges Policy with specific detail being given in the Contract Partner Agreement. Our approach is fully open and transparent and aligned to the Colleges financial rules and regulations.
- vii. CWA will provide training opportunities as appropriate for our Partner Subcontractors in strategic, operational, quality and added value aspects. For example, in the last year we have made available the following briefing and training opportunities:
 - ❖ Mental Health First Aid
 - ❖ Teaching, Learning and Assessment [TLA] strategies
 - ❖ Embedding safeguarding into the curriculum
 - ❖ Preparing for inspection
 - ❖ Reporting of safeguarding concerns
 - ❖ Joint attendance at employer forums and sector bodies
 - ❖ Approaches to End Point Assessment [EPA]
 - ❖ Skills scans and occupational assessment

3. Quality Assurance/Inspection/Audit

- i. Quality Assurance Audits [QAA] are undertaken independently of the Partnership Team and auditors observe the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This function is carried out by internal college colleagues in the Learning Practice, this being overseen by the Head of Learning Improvement. This provides a level of separation from the day-to-day management of our partners, ensuring an objective approach is upheld.
- ii. Our QAA process provides opportunities to speak directly to sub-contracted staff and college learners in areas such as learner progress, attendance, support, assessment and IQA, careers guidance and work experience.
- iii. Quality assurance audits are discussed within termly contract management meetings and through operational support provided by the Partnership Team. Additional planned or short notice audits can be arranged based on risk. A detailed report will be generated following the audit and shared with all parties. This process is detailed in our Work Instructions and Expectations – Partnerships Procedure LNG08 Rev 11. Partners will be obligated to fully comply with all aspects pertaining to audit and inspection.
- iv. An annual Area Performance Review [APR] report for Partnerships is formulated on an iterative basis covering all aspects of subcontractor performance. This is overseen by the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality [VPCQ] with regular meetings taking place to support the drafting process, challenge poor performance and celebrate success. An output of the process is the generation of a Quality Improvement Plan [QIP] to address areas for improvement. This in turn is used to generate our Annual Reviews for each partner with their own specific action plans for continuous improvement. This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis at Partner Management Meetings.

4. Management of Cessation

- i. CWA reserves the right to terminate the partnership arrangement at any time should operational performance fall below minimum levels of performance expected by the Education & Skills Funding Agency [ESFA], Ofsted or KPIs set within the contract. The partnership will always be withdrawn in such a way as to ensure minimum impact on learner outcomes. Should the agreement be terminated on any of the grounds specified above, CWA reserves the right to obtain access and retain all learner documentation and related records held by the Partner in its capacity to obtain a positive learner outcome and satisfy funding audit and ESFA requirements.
- ii. Should the partner wish to terminate the agreement for any reason then it is expected that active learners will complete their programme of study, the minimum notice period being nine months. The partner must co-operate to make sure that there is continuity of learning if the subcontract agreement ends, irrespective of the reasons for cessation.
- iii. Further details on cessation are included in the Partner Contract Agreement.

5. Efficiencies and Cost Control

- i. Staffing and related costs, such as training and CPD, will be carefully considered to ensure maximum return on investment. Best practice will be shared across subcontractors either face-to-face or electronically. The cost of any training activity will be minimised, with training delivered across the organisation and with partners synchronously where possible.

6. Related Documentation

- i. The following documentation should be referred to in addition to this policy:
 - ❖ Supply Chain Fees & Charges Policy
 - ❖ Work Instructions and Expectations – Partnerships Procedure LNG08 Rev 11
 - ❖ Procurement Documentation
 - ❖ Template Contract Agreement
 - ❖ Contract Management Meeting Agenda Template
 - ❖ Record of Management Meeting
 - ❖ Partnership Annual Review

7. Policy Review

- i. The College will review this policy annually. This review will take place in June of each year, and any policy revisions will be completed and published prior to the commencement of the next academic year.

8. Communication

- i. Any changes to the policy will be communicated to existing subcontractors at contract management meetings. Furthermore, the College will distribute a copy of this policy to all potential new subcontractors and discuss it with them as part of the College's pre-contracting process.

9. Approval

- i. This Policy [Ver 2:07/23] was approved by the Finance & General Purposes Committee of the Colleges Corporation on 19th July 2023.