



Invitation to tender – freelance contract

Scoping the potential of the Early Career Researchers’ Network for Wales

Background

In summer 2020, the Learned Society of Wales established a cross-institutional, cross-disciplinary [network for Early Career Researchers](#) (ECRs) in Wales. This followed consultation with colleagues across the sector, in which we identified several areas where the Society could add value to the existing work of universities and the Welsh Crucible.

The network now numbers over 750 contacts, and aims to help them:

- Engage with creative and inspiring ideas from the cutting-edge of research and practice
- Gain experiences and skills that support their professional development and profile
- Develop strong networks and collaborate across academic disciplines and sectors
- Respond collectively to important challenges and opportunities for Wales

So far, we have organised two online events for the network: a seminar on “Impact in Principle and in Practice” and a Public Engagement Masterclass. They attracted 80 and 150 participants respectively and received positive feedback. A third event, focusing on ECRs’ mental health, takes place in May.

The Society also awards three [Dillwyn Medals](#) each year to recognise outstanding contributions by ECRs.

Expansion of activities

We have been funded by the Higher Education Council for Wales (HEFCW) to deliver further events and to extend the network’s reach and presence. HEFCW’s support also enables us to scope the potential for the future development of the network, possibly into an Early Careers Academy for Wales.

Specification

Title	Scoping the potential of the Learned Society of Wales’ network for Early Career Researchers
Aim	We wish to receive a report on the current status of the Network and recommendations for its future development. The contractor will need to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feedback from network members and stakeholders, including the Society’s Fellows, universities in Wales, and the Welsh Crucible• How the Network can complement and enhance other organisations’ work with ECRs• How the Network can engage with researchers outside higher education, i.e. in the public sector, third sector and industry



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wider trends and environmental factors facing ECRs• The potential to establish an Early Careers Academy for Wales* <p>* An Early Careers Academy would be a more permanent structure to support ECRs' professional development and networks and could, potentially, provide ECRs with a platform for public or policy engagement. It may have a formalised election process (e.g. the Young Academy of Scotland) or a looser structure. We will expect the contractor to analyse the current support mechanisms for ECRs in Wales, consider what gaps might be filled by an Academy, and make recommendations for the Learned Society of Wales to progress this project.</p>
Methodology	It will be up to the contractor to produce a detailed methodology, but we anticipate the project will involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of feedback from network previously received from members and stakeholders• Focus groups, interviews and/or surveys to gather new data
Output	A report, based on the views of members and stakeholders, which provides short, medium and long term recommendations for action by the Society. This should consider implications for staff capacity within the Society, if appropriate. The audiences for the report are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council (trustees) and Chief Executive of the Learned Society of Wales• Potential funders of proposed future activities

Profile of contractor

We invite expressions of interest from individuals or organisations with the following expertise, skills and attributes:

- Strong knowledge and understanding of the higher education and research sector in Wales and the UK, and experience of working with stakeholders in the sector
- Experience of using a range of research methods, e.g. desk research, interviews, focus groups
- Ability to analyse and synthesise relevant data to produce a report with clear recommendations
- An efficient and proactive working style
- Excellent organisational skills, attention to detail and the ability to work to deadlines

The contractor will be expected to liaise with the Society's Chief Executive and with our Network Development Officer (a 0.6 FTE post shared by two staff members).

Expressions of interest

If you are interested in delivering this project, please provide an expression of interest outlining your:

- Relevant experience and skills, including any similar work you have completed previously
- Understanding of the context for ECRs in Wales
- Proposed methodology for the project



- Proposed timetable / number of days required, and a statement that you can complete the work within the specified timetable
- Costs

Expressions of interest must be provided in Word or PDF format and should be no longer than 2 A4 pages.

Costs

Please note that this is a small-scale project. The total budget available is **£3,750**, including VAT if applicable. The costs you indicate in your expression of interest should be a fully inclusive figure, covering your time, expenses, administration and any other relevant costs.

Assessment of bids

Although this is not a formal public procurement exercise, we will assess each expression of interest against four factors:

- Knowledge of the research landscape, institutions and context for early career researchers in Wales (30%)
- Research skills and proposed methodology (30%)
- Organisational skills and ability to work to deadlines (20%)
- Value for money (20%)

This is to ensure quality of delivery across the project, and to distinguish between competing proposals.

Project timings

The deadline for submission of expressions of interest is **17.00 on 10 June 2021**. These should be emailed to Martin Pollard, the Society's Chief Executive, at mpollard@lsw.wales.ac.uk. Martin is also the point of contact for any queries.

We anticipate awarding the contract by **17 June** and for the contractor to begin work as soon as possible thereafter.

Because many people in the research sector will be planning summer holidays, contractors should anticipate completing any interviews, focus groups or surveys as soon as possible.

The final project report should be delivered to the Society by **30 September 2021** at the latest.

Please feel free to share this call