# Prosper career coach tender specification and evaluation

## Subtitle goes here

We provide the tender specification and evaluation document we issued in December 2020. All prices/costs were correct as of December 2020. Do check the details of the tender process at your institution.

**Specification**

The Prosper Project is seeking tenders from professional career coaches to work with our first postdoc cohort as they undertake a programme of development activities aimed to prepare them with the skills, attributes and mindsets needed to thrive in a variety of career pathways beyond academia.

Prior to responding to this tender, you are invited to email us at prosper.postdoc@liverpool.ac.uk for a portal login to allow you to explore our current resources to assist you with your submission.

NB. The Christmas vacation period is 21st December 2020-4th January 2021, but we will respond to you promptly upon resumption of duties.

**Background**

Prosper is a Research England-funded project which unlocks the potential of postdocs to pursue careers beyond academia. Our ultimate goal is to open up the huge talent pool that exists within the postdoctoral research community, to the benefit of postdocs themselves, employers and the wider UK economy. And these are incredibly talented people. Diverse in their expertise, each can bring new ideas, experience and intellectual rigour to employers.

Co-creation is at our heart. Working together with postdocs, employers and Principal Investigators, we can create transformational change for researchers across all disciplines and employers in all sectors. Prosper provides postdocs with a framework to identify their unique capabilities and mindset and apply these to any career path they choose. Principal Investigators are supported to develop their postdocs in the most effective ways. And employers can help shape this postdoc development model to ensure it provides the qualities, approaches and skills vital to their growth and continued success.

Led by the University of Liverpool alongside partners at Lancaster University and the University of Manchester, Prosper is a project of national significance that will roll out across the UK in 2023.

Having already launched a prototype career development portal available to all research staff at the University of Liverpool, we are now embarking on Phase 2 of the project which involves taking a diverse cohort of postdocs through a programme of development to prepare them for roles beyond academia; to gather knowledge to improve and increase the resources available on the portal; and, crucially, to use this cohort learning to develop a sustainable model of development to be rolled out across the sector at the end of the project in March 2023. As such, a crucial aspect of the career coaching role beyond supporting participants, will be helping Prosper co-create coaching resources for the portal, enabling the sustainability of the model.

The Postdoc Career Development Pilot will comprise (if participants joined for a year at 10% FTE – and there is great flexibility over this):

**The Core Programme:**

* **Orientation**: a welcome lecture; initial coaching meetings; an introduction to journaling; and cohort-building social activities
* **Foundational stage**: a series of workshop led by Prosper’s Research Staff Developers leading participants through the Reflect and Explore sections of the Prosper portal, along with foundational workshops in creating a living CV, and setting up a LinkedIn account
* **Career cluster stage**: this is the point at which participants self-select onto one or more of 12 career clusters co-created with employer partners, where more intensive interventions are being designed to prepare postdocs for roles in particular sectors/functions. They will develop the key talents, skills and attributes required to be successful in that career cluster and have the chance to work with employers and/or employer co-created content.
* **‘Graduate’ from cohort**: when postdocs complete the programme with us, we will celebrate their achievements and continue to track their career trajectories.

**The Parallel Reflective Programme**:

* Regular group **career coaching** sessions (‘coaching circles’ comprised of a diverse range of postdocs, from different disciplinary backgrounds)
* **Journaling** the experience of being on the pilot and how different activities affect their mindset towards opportunities beyond academia. This will be mandatory for all participants, though how they wish to journal (voice notes, bullet points, haiku, cartoons) is at their discretion.
* Fortnightly drop-in **‘How’s the journey going?’ sessions** online with Prosper team members. This is a chance to check-in and reflect on how the process is working out for individuals.

**Social, community-building activitie**s:

* We’ll bring participants together virtually/F2F for **socials** as one of the selling points of the pilot is being part of a community of peers
* We will establish an **online forum** (such as a Microsoft Teams channel) where postdocs on the pilot can stay in touch with each other, chat and network informally

**What would we like to achieve?**

We seek to contract a team of up to five individual career coaches to partner with our cohort of 50 University of Liverpool postdocs who will be drawn from across all disciplinary backgrounds. These coaching relationships are a key aspect of the pilot experience for postdocs as they go through an intensive career development programme and consider career pathways they have never heard of before. All materials relating to the core programme and parallel reflective programme will be shared with career coaches to enable joined-up practice.

As a culture change project, part of Prosper’s most demanding work is in creating the conditions for mindset shift to occur in cohort participants. Rather than seeing a single track to success (an academic career), we wish to broaden postdocs’ horizons so that they realise – and actively pursue – their potential across a variety of career pathways. We seek to establish coaching relationships for each of our cohort participants so that they can be supported as they make this journey.

Our cohort of postdocs are a pilot and what we learn from working with them will ultimately inform the development of the Prosper model, portal and resources. We seek to understand the nature of the journey postdocs undertake to shift their mindset and consider a variety of pathways beyond academia. We will incorporate learning from our team of coaches and produce content for our online portal, thus ensuring the project’s sustainability beyond the remit of the cohort. To facilitate this, the team of coaches will participate in quarterly meetings with Prosper’s Research Staff Developers totalling 6 hours across the year.

Success in career coaching for this cohort would look like:

* Postdocs feeling able to share honestly with their coach
* Trusting relationships built up between coaches and coachees, as well as within the group setting
* Increased open-mindedness to pathways beyond academia from participants
* Increased confidence in planning their career development

Success in career coaching for the broader Prosper model would look like:

* Expert feedback on how to improve our existing portal resources
* Co-creation of coaching resources able to be hosted on the portal for those postdocs and their institutions who will eventually have portal access

All supplier contracts will be broken down by quarter, with the next phase renewing only if the provision is deemed appropriate. We will let you know this in a timely manner.

**Requirements and scheduling**

Logistical requirements:

* To coach a group of up to 10 postdocs through the Postdoc Career Development Pilot, April 2021-April 2022 through a mixture of group and 1:1 coaching.
* The above would be comprised of:
	+ **Group coaching**: an initial 1 hour meeting of your coaching circle (your group) to establish introductions. After that, the coaching circle would form every two weeks for the first two months, and once a month thereafter. Per coaching circle, then, we are looking at 15 hour-long meetings, inclusive of the initial meet and greet session.
	+ **1:1 coaching**: 30-minute individual sessions with each group member to establish introductions. Each individual postdoc would have an hour-long individual session roughly every quarter (with flexibility over scheduling). Per individual participant (each coach would have up to a maximum of 10), there would be 3 ½ hrs of 1:1 coaching.
* Support the mandatory journaling component of the parallel reflective programme by encouraging postdocs to complete their journaling regularly.
* Attendance at mandatory learning workshops every quarter to enable Prosper’s ongoing co-creation work, totally 6 hours across the year. Attendance at these will be paid as ‘learning hours’ rather than coaching hours.
* Providers will undertake **4 hours of self-guided training in April 2021** to go through the Reflect and Explore sections of the portal, as well as to read the outline of the development activities. This allows coaches to be fully conversant with both the Prosper portal and the programme of development coachees will be experiencing.
* While we wish for coaching relationships to develop trust through confidentiality, the project needs to learn from these interactions to inform the development of the Prosper resources. Coaches will keep anonymised notes of where pinch-points occur for participants. We will not pry into individual details, just require an overview of where, how and why things become more challenging during the programme.
* To career coach a diverse group of participants, as we seek to mix postdocs from disciplinary backgrounds and, indeed, move them beyond strict disciplinary categorisations of self and other

Experience:

* Demonstrable experience/understanding of postdoctoral experience and the challenges of career development for this particular audience
* Evidence of successful career coaching relationships (with evidence of coaching content creation desirable), which may be supported by professional references
* Evidence of successful coaching both face to face and virtually (ideally including ILM qualifications – testimonials alone will not suffice). While covid19 may mean that all coaching is virtual, we envisage having cohort participants based at overseas research units, necessitating virtual interactions.
* Ability to offer group coaching as well as individual coaching, as the cohort identity and sharing among peers will be crucial for this group

Attitude:

* A willingness to share learning as Prosper seeks to break new ground in the postdoc career development space. Attendance at quarterly learning workshops (6 hours across the year) will be mandatory, so the coaches and Prosper can co-create content for future iterations of the portal.
* Collegiality with other practitioners and an openness to the ongoing co-creation work of Prosper
* Flexibility of delivery, as due to Prosper’s commitment to democratising access postdocs may join the cohort unevenly, or have varying amounts of time commitment to it
* Related to the above, the flexibility to offer a mixture of group and individual coaching, where within the group participants will be at different points within the programme

Cost:

* Practitioners who charge in the range £80-£120 per hour of coaching, with £30-70 per hour of preparation or learning workshop attendance
* While early events are likely to be entirely virtual, please estimate your travel costs from autumn onwards in the hope that some F2F may be possible from the autumn

While the pilot itself starts late April 2021, providers will undertake **4 hours of self-guided training in early April 2021** to go through the Reflect and Explore sections of the portal, as well as to read the outline of the development activities. Prosper’s Research Staff Developers will be available to you to answer any questions during this period.

The initial cohort participants will begin in April 2021, but as our programme of development seeks to be flexible to contract start-dates etc. it is likely that rather than an entirely-formed cohort beginning in April 2021 that we have participants joining at different points. Therefore, we would be assigning initial coachees to coaches and keeping in contact with coaches as additional participants join.

We anticipate each coach having 10 coachees as a maximum, but this number may start off lower then increase as additional participants join the cohort. New participants will join every quarter following the timetable of our recruitment process.

**NB. This is Prosper’s first cohort of postdocs. A second cohort is intended to run in Spring 2022 so there is the possibility of future collaboration and further work with us.**

**Evaluation of tender**

All aspects of a tenderer’s response will contribute to the overall conclusion of the tender evaluation for this contract. The importance of each criterion can be determined by the weight attributed to it.

The University *may* if necessary ask tenderers to make presentations. Should this be required, tenderers will be given guidance on content and advice on how it will be assessed.

A coach will be awarded a contract based on the following criteria:

1. **Cost/Value for money (20%):** All submissions will be looked at in terms of being most economically advantageous. We have outlined our price brackets above and will be benchmarking all submissions against that.
2. **Previous experience (30%):** Submissions will be scored on examples of previous work provided that are within our sector eco-system and/or their proximity to the type of career coaching for which we are looking
3. **Submission quality (50%)**: Does the submission adequately address the requirements of the tender? Does it address issues particular to the project eg. the specific nature of the postdoc audience; the importance of mindset shift; a willingness to co-create with Prosper? Does it include COVID-19 contingencies regarding the possibility of a blend of F2F and virtual coaching?

**Scoring criteria:**

**Value for money:** Each submission will be awarded either 2, 4, 6, 8 or 10/10 based on the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Description** |
| 2 | Not acceptable: The response is significantly above budget and/or doesn’t meet a significant proportion of the items contained in the requirements.  |
| 4 | Poor: The response is above budget and some items contained in the brief are missing.  |
| 6 | Acceptable: The response is within reasonable distance of the budget and covers all the requirements.  |
| 8 | Good: The response is within reasonable distance of the budget and covers all items in the requirements in detail. |
| 10  | Excellent: The response is within reasonable distance of the budget, covers all items in the requirements in detail, and demonstrates with a willingness to be flexible as the pilot moves forward. |

**Previous experience:** Each submission will be awarded either 2, 4, 6, 8 or 10/10 based on the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Description** |
| 2 | Not acceptable: The response does not show any evidence of previous career coaching work.  |
| 4 | Poor: Whilst the response gives examples of previous career coaching work, they are unacceptable. |
| 6 | Acceptable: The response gives examples of previous career coaching work but these may not be recent examples or are predominately from sectors/situations far removed from our own.  |
| 8 | Good: The response gives examples of career coaching previous work that is recent and comes from similar or analogous sectors/situations. Examples of previous experience are detailed and display clear relevance to Prosper. |
| 10  | Excellent: The response includes examples of previous career coaching work that is both recent and covers our target audiences and/or our aims. Examples of previous experience are detailed, display clear relevance to Prosper and include mention of resource creation.  |

**Submission quality\*\*:** Each submission will be awarded either 2, 4, 6, 8 or 10/10 based on the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Description** |
| 2 | Not acceptable: The submission does not address all the requirements and/or does not meet the brief provided.  |
| 4 | Poor: While the requirements are addressed, the submission indicates there is a limited or poor understanding of the brief, and/or there is a lack of convincing evidence of experience/performance/ability to deliver. High risk that the solution proposed is not completely viable/will not meet the requirements. |
| 6 | Acceptable: The requirements are addressed. The submission indicates there is an acceptable understanding of the brief and/or there is acceptable evidence of experience/performance/ability to deliver. Medium risk that the solution proposed is not completely viable/will not meet the requirements. |
| 8 | Good: The requirements are addressed. The submission indicates there is a good understanding of the brief, and/or there is good evidence of experience/performance/ability to deliver. Low risk that the solution proposed is not completely viable/will not meet the requirements. |
| 10  | Excellent: The requirements are addressed. The submission indicates there is an excellent understanding of the brief and/or there is excellent evidence of experience/performance/ability to deliver. Very low risk that the solution proposed is not completely viable/will not meet the requirements.  |

\*\*COVID-19 contingencies must also be addressed by submissions – this can be discussed further at proposal discussion stage with selected candidates.