



SUPPORT FOR THE UK  
DWP WORK PROGRAMME  
AND OTHER EVOLVING BID CONTEXTS

FOSTER BRANDT



Tel: 00 44 (0) 2380 762002

Fax: 00 44 (0) 2380 762003

Web: [www.fosterbrandt.co.uk](http://www.fosterbrandt.co.uk)

Email: [info@fosterbrandt.co.uk](mailto:info@fosterbrandt.co.uk)

Address: Foster Brandt Ltd, Arboretum House,  
4 Bassett Green Drive, Southampton, SO16 3QH, UK.

Concepts & design approaches in this document are copyright of Foster Brandt Ltd and should not be used without prior agreement. We welcome licensing inquiries, potentially on a partnership basis.

© Foster Brandt, 2010.

Foster Brandt has shaped teams, tools & thinking in policy bids internationally for 12 years. And at times we encounter a context which re-writes the 'bidding rules'. The DWP Work Programme (ERSS) is one of these.

Our roles for different ERSS bidders suggest that the most successful prime and sub-contract teams will have tackled this context differently. This includes creating, revising and countering messages, concepts & content progressively.

ERSS+ AID provides support for an evolutionary, dynamic, bid framework.



#### **RAIN CHECK**

benchmarks bids or drafts against internal exemplars and external trends.



#### **BOOT CAMP**

provides an intensive, tailored, skills work-out for a moving bid context.



#### **WORK MATE**

dovetails experienced, flexible, policy bid reinforcers/mentors into your team.



#### **LAST WRITE**

seconds painstaking wordsmiths to hone messages, USPs & counter USPs.



#### **BID GURU**

dispatches a rare bird to your roost - a leading UK policy bid all-rounder.



#### **WORK HOUSE**

shares creative solutions for intensive bid working environments.



#### **FUSE BOX**

rewires your team to spot, use - or counter - new bid context intelligence.



#### **IDEA FARM**

grows innovative delivery solutions from internal & external resources.



WE BENCHMARK  
BIDS OR DRAFTS  
AGAINST INTERNAL  
EXEMPLARS...

AND EXTERNAL  
TRENDS.

UK bidding continues to evolve rapidly, with DWP contests playing their part in this change. Market entrants adapt approaches from other sectors & countries, helping to revise conventions.

RAIN CHECK is an evolutionary quality assurance (QA) model.

It helps a bid team to replicate an agreed best internal style - but also to anticipate emerging competitor approaches.

#### Your QA

RAIN CHECK assesses proximity to current & emerging quality norms. For the ERSS context we do this in 3 ways:

##### a) Work Programme drafts

We review and/or score texts, at different draft stages. We suggest key practical improvements.

##### b) ERSS framework bid

We revisit the text that won (or failed to win) a framework place and re-interpret your DWP feedback, adding solutions.

##### c) Sample

We study the above against a wider set (prior DWP, MOJ, SFA, LDA, etc) to assess approach and progression.

#### Our QA

We review many bids each year. We (i) critique & improve drafts for bidders; (ii) score & select bids and write feedback for buyers & funders; (iii) analyse client text in training/mentoring roles; and (iv) develop & share new approaches ourselves.

Further QA / critique options are offered by our REVIEW product (5 levels, plus mentoring) - part of our ART OF THE BID suite.



BOOT CAMP is a new take on skills - for a moving bid context.

The model is flexible. It responds to skills gaps *and* emerging issues.

BOOT CAMP draws on new tools & thinking developed for our new development framework, BID4 (brochure on-line).

The approach works to a running bid, or scenario. We piloted this concept in 2000 and constantly refine it. Users apply skills to a complete bid cycle - or key stages needing focus.

### Elements

Each BOOT CAMP differs, but involves:

1. a flexible learning agenda, of 4 to 10 blocks;
2. a running scenario, or ITT question set; and
3. homework, with review & feedback, to apply learning and assess progression.

Our learning agendas are guided by two factors:

- most relevant, or most challenging, parts of an ITT; and
- client skill needs (we often sample text to guide on these).

### Options

We have three of these for ERSS:

- 'Immersion' - an intensive, tailored, 1- or 2-day session, built around key ITT questions / exemplar client texts.
- 'Sequence' - a series of 3 or more workshops, tackling skills and/or showcasing emerging practice at each stage.
- 'Focus' - a workshop to address a weak area, or skills and thinking modes for the final push.



WE PROVIDE AN INTENSIVE, TAILORED, SKILLS WORK-OUT...

FOR A MOVING BID CONTEXT.



WE DOVETAIL  
EXPERIENCED,  
FLEXIBLE,  
POLICY BID  
REINFORCEMENTS  
& MENTORS INTO  
YOUR TEAM.

Foster Brandt specialise in co-workers, who often mentor.

We supply more experienced work mates and communicators to add strengths - or plug gaps - in a bid crew.

Beyond our core team, we increasingly screen and source associates and partners with more specific skill sets to add particular value for a key role.

#### **Work Programme skill sets**

Most of our team are higher-level policy bid all-rounders and class-leading writers. But we also track specialists who write bids well, but particularly add on customer and policy insights. Our four interim/contractor profiles for ERSS are:

##### **1. Policy bid leader/mentor**

All-rounder with significant bid lead experience in Welfare to Work, and/or Employment & Skills, with proven capacity to guide & nurture bid talent.

##### **2. Writer/mentor**

Team member - all-rounder.

##### **3. Customer analyst**

Team member - with particular insights into customer issues and solutions.

##### **4. Research/policy analyst**

Team member - with particular ability to resolve key bid facts from complex area/competitor/partner/policy intelligence.

We particularly search out colleagues with proven capacity to integrate seamlessly and sensitively into client environments.



Our final bid revision is painstaking, creative, rigorous.

Higher-level work on final text is arguably now an art, more than a science. We have studied & shared solutions for this stage of bidding for many years. We re-write the re-writes.

### **The final draft**

The final draft is a key bid discipline. But it often suffers in a final push for (often less crucial) lower-level improvement.

The value of care at this stage is now better understood. Checks on spelling, punctuation, grammar, gaps, consistency - and continuing eligibility, of course - are important. However the real opportunity is rather different.

This is to enter the mindsets of different scoring and selection interests and enable a bid to work better, at first sight, at several levels: question, section, cross-bid. As writing specialists, who also score and run selection, we are exceptionally placed.

### **The WP final draft**

ERSS bids will need:

- sharper evidencing;
- clearer USP definition;
- clearer counter USP use;
- visible running arguments;  
and arguably
- the crispest, most concentrated, writing in W2W yet,  
while maintaining underlying logic, argument, USP and flow.

(Now what is my section closer? Do I reuse 'painstaking'?)



WE HONE  
TEXT, MESSAGES,  
USPs AND  
COUNTER USPs...

TO HELP A BID  
FULFIL ITS  
POTENTIAL.



WE DISPATCH A  
RARE BIRD TO YOUR  
ROOST...

EVIDENCE?

UK policy bids are moving away from overstatement and spin.

### Guru?

So while guru is a good potential bid word (short, rich in meaning and fitting a trend of simpler style) it is also hard to evidence and subjective. This is risky combination. Bid scorers, such as ourselves, may mark down in such contexts.

### Evidencing?

'Justification', as the issue was once better known, is now a key policy bid content and style issue. The notion entered UK DWP bids more firmly in 2008 (for fND1). And it remains a challenge, not least when presenting 'Black Box' offers. Fortunately there are accepted ways to *evidence innovation* (from ESF etc).

### Evidencing Guru?

So how could one justify use of the term 'guru' for ERSS?  
Arguably if an individual had:

1. led/advised on 30+ W2W bids in 6 years (and ESF, since 1994)
2. shaped policy bid frameworks (UK Govt, ESF, ERDF, donor)
3. scored bids & chaired selection (as above, plus Lottery)
4. influenced bid method (UK, EU, other, 30+ countries)
5. trained & mentored bidders (3,000+, 6 countries)
6. achieved significant client wins (£1,100 million+)
7. written for media & politicians in several countries
8. many testimonials on integration, impact, insight (300+).

We dispatch our guru to teams facing key bid challenges, such as ERSS. Rates are ultimately less crucial to us than finding environments, with clear scope for mutual development.



WORK HOUSE considers and adjusts a bid team environment.

'Environment' is everything that supports a bid crew, **virtually**, **physically** and **emotionally**.

WORK HOUSE brings ideas & approaches to fine-tune an internal set-up to the needs of ERSS.

These are often smaller points, which we use ourselves, or see working well elsewhere.

**Virtual** bidding is an area, in which we have particular experience, running major bids in this way since 2000.

*Focal points:* aptitude; work practices; IT use; home working; conferencing; and virtual document use.

**Physical** environments are easier to adjust than many think.

*Focal points:* hot desks; 'ops / war room' facilities; production and quiet areas; and meeting use. We also believe 'away days' and 'focus weeks' to be valuable in demanding bid contests\*.

**Emotional** factors can be overlooked (or overstated) as a bid cycle starts. Our own, 24-7, culture is demanding, but we nurture via other, often non-financial, compensations.

*Focal points:* team support; work-life catch-up; risk & reward models; creative role split; and 'agony aunt' (we often troubleshoot behind the scenes for clients in a pastoral sense).

One inspiration for us is **Arboretum House** (AH), our network hub in Southampton. This is a large home-office suite, which scales up to a bid HQ, via add-on work zones and outsourcing. Our flexible, wildlife-rich, environment seems to aid creativity.

[\*] We can source virtual office, team & accommodation facilities near to AH to support an away day / focus week model.



WE SHARE  
CREATIVE  
SOLUTIONS FOR  
INTENSIVE BID  
WORKING  
ENVIRONMENTS.



WE REWIRE YOUR  
TEAM TO SPOT,  
USE, OR COUNTER,  
NEW BID CONTEXT  
INTELLIGENCE.

Work Programme bidders are needing to make - and apply - connections faster than ever before.

At the same time, the landscape, in which they must do this, has become more complex. There are significantly more policy, partner & competitor points to assess and use (or ignore).

We suggest that ERSS bid competitions will emphasise a key new bidder attribute: [sifter](#) / [connector](#).

#### The need

We believe that even the most successful recent W2W bid teams will need some 're-wiring' to adjust thinking styles to meet this new bidding rule. So how best to do this?

#### The response

We have been considering an effective practical response to this issue for some time. We have recently piloted a new solution for a W2W prime bid team, with some success.

Our response is FUSE BOX.

It comprises:

- a [briefing](#) on thinking styles, demonstrating connections to be made and the ways these are transferred to a bid; and
- an [expanding tool box & pack](#) to apply this in the bid cycle.

Our solution helps bidders sift, classify, connect and share key ideas better. It is particularly helpful for newcomers to the sector, or this type of evolving contest. It provides a user interface between bidders, resources and the outside world.



Bids in new policy contexts have a demanding appetite for strong, original, ideas - to take such policy forward.

This is crucial in a policy framework, such as ERSS, in which innovation ('Black Box') has been repeatedly flagged.

Great bid concepts develop over time. However, they need a starting point. And that is where our IDEA FARM can help.

IDEA FARM offers an external perspective - and several ways to apply it - to help identify more compelling bid concepts. These can be at overall bid, or single question, level.

### Perspectives

We combine those of:

- facilitator (to release ideas);
- journalist/writer (to capture ideas, in a memorable way); and
- scorer (to rank ideas, and also to inject a sceptical take).

We can also often access more specific expertise - on a key topic, or customer group - to support the above.

### Options

IDEA FARM can be based on:

1. a workshop (with internal/external participants);
2. research (on area, national & international solutions); or
3. both of the above.

New ideas need reality checks and care with argument in bids. The former is a provider issue. But we can help on the latter.



WE HELP YOU TO  
GROW INNOVATIVE  
DELIVERY SOLU-  
TIONS...

FROM INTERNAL  
AND EXTERNAL RE-  
SOURCES.

erss+  
aid