

Consultancy Opportunity

Rights and accountability in asylum contracts (AASC & AIRE) – scoping and enhancing sector plans

Term: May- October 2024

Available budget: £7,000 including expenses for interviewees and participation in any convening, and VAT where applicable.

Deadline to submit expression of Interest: May 6th at 10 am

Background

Our mission

The mission of [Migration Exchange \(MEX\)](#) is to cultivate insight, connection and action across the UK refugee and migration sector. We have two ultimate goals: an equitable, power-aware, and intersectional funding landscape, better able to resource systems change, and a connected and action-focused refugee and migration sector, better able to drive systems change. Our [strategic framework](#) sets out how we focus particularly on independent funders and charities to achieve this mission, connecting people through convening, events, and a funder network.

Our values and approach

- We are collaborative, inclusive and anti-racist
- We respect rights and equity in all our work - staffing, grant-making, governance, delivery and partnerships
- We co-design all our interventions in dialogue with others
- We add value to the bilateral relationships between funders and sector organisations by focusing on strategic issues and being relational, agile and responsive
- We proactively seek and engage with critical challenge and diverse perspectives
- We are transparent about our activities and choices
- We are open about our successes and failures, and what we have learned
- We will be expert in the specific challenges facing this sector as a result of the policy and legal context, but will proactively build common cause across issues

Our work

We commission research and analysis on trends and patterns affecting the UK refugee and migration sector, as well as developing and co-designing responses to shared

challenges and opportunities. Our general approach is to listen and respond to what people doing the work say is needed. This consultancy is informed by the 6 key areas of focus we identified in our review of the [UK refugee and migration sector](#) (June 2023): adapting to external challenges and crises, racial justice, power and lived experience, employee wellbeing and leadership, and alliance and collaboration.

About this consultancy work

MEX is currently seeking a consultant to undertake scoping, convening and briefing related to Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts (AASC)¹ and The Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Contract (AIRE)². These contracts were awarded in 2019 and run for 10 years, with break clauses. More information about the contracts is available in these Asylum Matters guides [here](#) and [here](#).

There are four components to this work:

- a) **Scoping:** to gather information on current work happening in the sector which aims to inform future contracts for asylum support and accommodation in the UK, through desk-based research and one to one interviews, including with experts on contract processes
- b) **Convening:** to bring key organisations together to share current plans and discuss and explore the opportunities to engage with this process in the future, ensuring input of both technical expertise and lived experience, and experiences from other sectors (for example the women's criminal justice sector)
- c) **Power analysis and awareness:** to undertake power mapping and analysis to support relationship building with key stakeholders, and consider the power dynamics and structural issues inherent in this work
- d) **Briefing:** produce a short private report with options for future engagement and resourcing on this topic that can be shared with sector organisations and independent funders

We anticipate that the methodology for this work will be a mixture of desk research, one to one interviews and group discussion. Initial questions for exploration include:

¹ The Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts (AASC) govern the relationship between the Home Office and the three companies contracted to provide asylum accommodation. Detailed specifications on the services which have to be provided are set out in the Statement of Requirements for the contracts, which can be found at: <http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-1112/AASC - Schedule 2 - Statement of Requirements.pdf>

² The Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Contract (AIRE) governs the relationship between the Home Office and the contractor provided to give advice and assistance to people seeking asylum in understanding the asylum support system across the UK. There is a close relationship between the two sets of contracts in the framework to support people seeking asylum. The AIRE contract has been awarded to Migrant Help. Detailed specifications on the services which have to be provided are set out in the Statement of Requirements for the Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Contract, which can be found at: http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-1112/AIRE_ContractSchedule_2-SoR - HOC_Published.pdf

1. What previous work has already happened in the sector concerning AASC & AIRE contract standards, operation and oversight and what are the key lessons that can be applied to current and future work?
2. What activity is already underway in the sector and civil society and what are the objectives and timescales of this work? Who is involved?
3. How are the views, experiences and demands of those directly impacted currently reflected in the work in this area? What are the considerations when planning for future activity?
4. Where are the areas of mutual interest and shared objectives across NGOs and civil society? How can these be strengthened?
5. What are the opportunities risks and constraints related to this work? How can these be mitigated?
6. What are the current gaps in knowledge, information, technical expertise and relationships? How could these be better addressed in the short and medium term?
7. Are there particular resource implications for a more proactive and coordinated approach to this agenda, so that NGOs and independent funders are better prepared to collaborate effectively and prepared for future contracting processes, in the interested of rights, fairness, transparency and accountability?
8. What are the key other contracts that affect the lives of people in the asylum process and what more could be done to develop proactive approaches to these contracts in order to increase fairness and transparency? Which should be prioritised?

The consultant will be required to consider the different implications for various types of NGO, from small advocacy organisations to large charities.

Output and audience

- A short accessible private report to NGOs and independent funders
- A short briefing that could be shared with stakeholders within government (this is a potential output for discussion with the consultant and organisations working on this agenda)
- A debrief webinar sharing the key findings, supported by a short presentation

Timescale:

- Expressions of interest should be submitted by 6th May at 10 am
- Interviews dates will be arranged with shortlisted candidates in May – dates will be arranged to suit the availability of candidates but are likely to be in third week of May.
- We would like the work to be conducted in June and July, with outputs shared in late September/early October 2024

Consultant qualifications and specifications

We are looking for a consultant with essential skills and expertise in migration, refugee issues, and a strong understanding of the landscape for contracts in this area.

The ideal candidate for this work will have:

1. **Values:** Alignment with the values of MEX- including, anti-racist, anti-oppression and feminist. Excellent understanding and experience of working in a values-based, co-design, power-aware, and ethical way.
2. **Research and scoping:** Demonstrated excellence in conducting outreach to impacted communities and research and scoping exercises within the UK migration and refugee sector and an understanding of how contracts are awarded and monitored. Ability to identify key themes and concerns through analysis.
3. **Project management:** Strong skills in project management, including the ability to handle multiple tasks, meet deadlines, and manage potential risks effectively.
4. **Adaptability and creativity:** Creativity and flexibility to respond to emerging issues and adjust the approach to our style of delivery. Willingness to adapt strategies based on evolving circumstances.
5. **Stakeholder engagement:** Experience working with a diverse range of stakeholders within the charity sector, including charities, funders, and grassroots organisations. Ability to navigate and understand various perspectives and concerns. Excellent communication skills.
6. **Output preparation:** Demonstrable experience in preparing accessible and engaging outputs, such as reports or recommendations, in various formats.

We welcome applications from those with lived experience of the immigration system.

Application instructions:

Please send expressions of interest to Migration Exchange at mex@global-dialogue.org. For an informal conversation about the work please get in touch using the same email address. We are happy to receive expressions of interest from individuals, organisations and joint applications. Providers must be based in the UK.

Expressions of interest should include:

- Two-page cover letter highlighting how you meet the above specification and how you would approach this brief.
- CV of each person on the team, including links to at least two examples of previous work

If shortlisted, we will require at least two examples of previous work and a reference.

For the successful consultant(s), we will agree GDPR procedures and a safeguarding approach prior to commencing work.