

Questions and Answers for potential participants

This document sets out a few frequently asked questions about the project to help guide potential participating local authorities and related partners.

What does it cost to participate?

There will be no costs to participating authorities for the first year. For the second and subsequent year a subscription will be introduced. The subscription, which provides promotion and end – to end recruitment is expected to be relatively modest. Exactly how the subscription model works is agreed by the partners in the 3rd quarter of year one. Similar models in the North East and the West Midlands have worked by banding partners according to the number of employees. The only fixed cost is for the supplier, other costs for marketing and portal support resource are flexible. Subscriptions to similar projects in the North East and West Midlands are between £300 and £13,000 year per authority. The subscription costs will be greatly outweighed by cost savings (see below), even over a very short time period.

What are the main benefits of joining a regional or sub-regional portal?

Costs Savings

- The group procurement, managed by the RIEP project team is more cost effective than individual procurements for a similar service
- Portals create a critical mass of vacancies that individual authorities cannot achieve, and this is more attractive to jobseekers, increasing audience reach and contributing to continued reduction in expensive paper media advertising
- Reduced costs by avoiding sending applications packs and other paperwork
- Typical first year savings for a unitary authority switching entirely to online recruitment are £350,000

Efficiencies

- Simplification and automation of the recruitment process

Improvement

- Online, flexible search tools for jobseekers within the portal makes finding the right vacancy easier, and will notify jobseekers directly when new, relevant opportunities become available
- Application tracking, qualification screening, CRB pre-processing
- Workforce development tools such as induction programmes, skills and employability testing.
- Helpful processes for job seekers who register, such as pre-populated application forms, interview self booking, qualification advisor, online assessment centre

What if my authority already has a good vacancies page on our website?

The portal can work alongside and complement your existing website. Sharing your vacancies onto the portal will increase your audience and jobseekers can then be directed back to your authority website for further processing.

We already have a computerised HR system in-house. Why would we want a new one?

The portal project allows you to retain as much or as little of your existing processes as you wish. Some authorities with well developed systems have chosen to use the portal simply as an additional external vacancy advertising tool, without incorporating any of the back end functionality. Jobseekers interested in vacancies on the portal are directed back to authority in-house system to apply online.

Will having jobs on the portal increase local competition between authorities?

A regional or sub regional portal aims offers job seekers a better choice of opportunities than a single authority's job site, and a more easily accessible and searchable range of vacancies than the local print media. Inevitably this will allow better comparisons between jobs in different authorities.

Will jobs advertised on a portal exclude disadvantaged groups?

Job portals should be part of wider strategies to tackle worklessness and exclusion. The project is committed to working with organisations such as jobcentre plus and support agencies to make vacancies in local authorities available more widely and with minimal duplication of effort.

In addition, access to the internet continues to rise, and is easier to access in different ways – for example through mobile phones and digital TV. The project will make services available through a wider variety of media. The internet is also a diverse medium – information can be represented for those with a variety of sensory impairments.

Applying directly online is quicker and more accessible than a downloaded application form, particularly for candidates who register to have basic information about themselves stored for multiple applications.

What do we need to do in-house to get the maximum benefit from a regional or sub regional portal?

Each local authority is slightly different in the way it recruits, and in the processes that it already has in place. Some set-up time is needed to meet your requirements. Generally you will need an officer trained to manage portal users and other officers able to upload vacancies and associated documents. If you opt to use more of the functions the portal offers you may want recruiting managers throughout your organisations to use the portal to shortlist candidates.

Each portal will come with a benefits realisation plan to allow partners to take the steps in-house to get the best process improvements, financial savings and efficiency gains. Each partner organisation should be prepared to undertake some straightforward monitoring. The portal will feed you sufficient information to monitor benefits, and to help you make decisions about how far you wish to use the portal to undertake a wider range of tasks.

Will my Authority get its own homepage/ branding/ identity on the portal?

Yes. A 'landing page' for your authority is provided, together with as many other pages of information you wish to add. Through your in-house promotion of job opportunities you can chose to direct job seekers to your landing page, to a specific job, to a more general homepage for the region or to a specialist page (for example for hard to fill vacancies or a jobs fair). How you appear on the portal will be entirely flexible within a design scheme that can encompass your brand, logos, and colour scheme.

How will job seekers know to come to the portal?

Crucial to the success of the Portal is attracting the greatest number of jobseekers to the site. A marketing plan is included in the project to launch the portal and ensure it is firmly established in the competitive online recruitment market. A variety of methods will be used, such as advertising in

traditional media, online search optimisation (ensuring your portal is easily found by searching the internet) and in – house efforts such as local council magazines. In addition new media such as social networking (Facebook, Twitter etc) will be exploited to allow jobseekers to inform each other of opportunities.

Will the portal integrate with our existing HR / Payroll / Finance system?

The portal will have the ability to share vacancy information with other partner sites and external partner sites. Sharing of any other data on top of the vacancy data is classed as bespoke and it is possible to integrate but there will be costs incurred from the integration. Each partner will have an individual implementation plan.

How many partners do we need for a portal?

There isn't a set answer to this question, but as a guideline, we would need significant interest from a partners collectively representing somewhere in the region of 50% of the regions public sector workforce to justify investment. It may well be that partners differ in their level of commitment to the portal and some simply use the front end as a vacancy sharing tool. The project in the North East has 100% participation from authorities and also 3 Fire and Rescue services involved, this has yielded significant cost and efficiency savings.

What do we need to do to move this forward?

If there was sufficient interest from a region then we would imagine that an employers association or an appointed partner would be a suitable coordination point for a regional portal partnership. To take advantage of the proposal we would need a joint letter of intent from the partnership.

What happens after you have received the letter of intent?

An implementation manager will be assigned to the region to work with and gather essential information from each partner to produce an implementation plan. These individual implementation plans will feed into an overall portal plan which will also involve the technical supplier.

Do you have further information and figures about the cost and efficiency savings?

Providing the following information about your organisation will enable us to calculate estimated savings for a business case. The more up to date the figures are from will be more accurate but even older data from 2006/2007 will provide a good indication

- Local Authority Headcount
- No of Vacancies advertised for the year
- Print Recruitment Advertising Spend
- Online Recruitment Advertising Spend

DOCUMENT ENDS