

## Top tips for developing your bid response

- 1** **Read and re-read the guidance documents.**

Whilst it may seem an obvious point, it is very easy to jump into the details of drafting your response after reading the bid guidance documentation once. However, by re-reading the document multiple times and returning to it throughout your bid development process, you can better ensure you capture all the requirements in your response.
- 2** **Don't just answer the question, think about why you are doing it.**

At the outset of your bid development process, you should have a clear vision of what you want to achieve as a cluster and why. Successful bids will have a clear articulation of their aims running as a 'golden thread' through the response, aligned to the Department for Education's stated policy objectives.
- 3** **Establish a bid team.**

Work with partner local authorities in your cluster to identify the decision-makers and key people that will be working on the bid. This will help you to have the right people involved in conversations and, ultimately, lead to a proposal that works for all local authorities.
- 4** **Have a plan.**

Once you have established your bid team, it is important to maintain momentum. Having a plan of how and when you will meet, who is responsible for what elements of the bid and setting intermediate deadlines, will support you in meeting the submission date.
- 5** **Identify and agree on your sign-off processes early.**

As part of your plan, you should identify approval processes in each local authority and agree on how the final bid response will be signed off. Expect each local authority to have a different process, so understanding and managing this will be vital to ensure you meet the bid deadline.

## Top tips for question 1 – Regional Working

- 6** **Demonstrate existing working relationships across your cluster.**

Show real examples where you have worked together as a cluster before – be that all local authorities or some. This could include Regional Adoption Agencies, ADCS Improvement and Innovation Alliances, or existing regional agreements on residential placements. Where possible, describe the nature of these relationships and any lessons you have learnt that could be incorporated into your approach for this programme.
- 7** **Consider developing a Theory of Change to articulate your vision and practice.**

A theory of change (or logic model) will help you tell the story of your proposals, linking outcomes, outputs and activities. It is a useful visual way of describing the change you want to happen and the steps involved – both for yourself and within the bid. Your Mutual Ventures coach can support you on this.
- 8** **Have a clear view of risks and understand the priorities.**

Focus on your top risks and prioritise them in order of impact to demonstrate that you know what is most critical to the successful delivery of your project. Make sure mitigation strategies are realistic and practical.

## Top tips for question 2 - Implementation Plan

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**Demonstrate that foster carers are at the centre of your vision and plans for your recruitment hub.**

Show how you will ensure that the experience of foster carers will shape the hub. How will you involve experienced foster carers and those with experience of fostering in the support you provide? Consider how you will collect feedback from prospective foster carers on their experience, and how you will learn from it. This could include when people decide not to continue with their application or things go wrong.

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**Develop your staff and resourcing model based on the outcomes you want to achieve, not the other way round.**

The purpose of the fostering recruitment hub is to do things differently. Challenge yourself on how you can best achieve your desired outcomes, and what needs to change in the 'traditional' approach of a local authority fostering service. How will you integrate foster carers in your hub? How will you manage peaks and troughs in enquiries? Will you use a 'case management' approach or a different model for supporting prospective foster carers?

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**Assign realistic timescales for each part of your implementation plan.**

Break your plan up into phases. Be ambitious but realistic when setting timescales, mindful of working together with partner local authorities. The implementation plan template provided by Mutual Ventures can support you in doing this.

## Top tips for question 3 - Costings

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**Align your costings with your implementation plan.**

Make sure there is 'read-across' between your costings and implementation plan. Use the same language and headings where possible. This will help the Department in assessing your bid quickly and give confidence that you have a clear plan.