

# GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

## REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2684

### Online qualitative research platform

#### Executive summary:

Approval is sought from the Executive Director of Strategy and Communications for a one-year contract with the GLA's current online qualitative research platform, from May 2024 to May 2025. The contract will be procured via the TfL Reseller and Associated Services Framework (Reseller framework). This contract follows four years' use of the same platform (through three separate successive contracts).

The platform will be used to conduct remote qualitative research delivered by GLA researchers, such as focus groups and diary studies, for policy teams throughout the GLA.

#### Decision:

That the Interim Executive Director of Strategy and Communication approves expenditure of up to £20,000, to use the GLA's online qualitative research platform for a further year. This takes total spend (over the five years of the GLA's use of an online qualitative research platform) up to £65,000.

#### AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

**Name:** Luke Bruce

**Position:** Interim Executive Director  
Strategy & Communications

**Signature:**



**Date:**

14/02/2024

## **PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE**

### **Decision required – supporting report**

#### **1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1. The Opinion Research team, in the City Intelligence Unit, regularly conducts qualitative opinion and market research with Londoners, to provide insight and evidence to the Mayor and policy teams throughout the GLA.
- 1.2. In May 2020, the GLA commissioned an online qualitative research platform. This enabled the Opinion Research team to conduct such research remotely whilst restrictions on face-to-face research were in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.3. The platform has enabled the GLA to reach a much wider group of Londoners than would otherwise have been possible, thereby facilitating our commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- 1.4. The Opinion Research team have also made full use of the platform’s capabilities to engage with participants in ways that would not have been possible with traditional research methods – e.g. quick polls, diary tasks, photo uploads, audio or audio-visual recorded responses, etc. The flexibility offered by this platform enables Londoners to respond to research at times most suitable for them.
- 1.5. In addition, the platform saves on the cost of renting space for focus groups. It also offers greater flexibility in timing for undertaking interviews.
- 1.6. A one year renewal, through the reseller framework, is requested to enable sufficient time to complete a comprehensive market review of developments in research and analysis software.
- 1.7. Expenditure for the initial 12-month contract budget of £10,000 was approved by the Senior Manager, Research and Engagement, via a Delegated Authority Record. Further expenditure of up to £15,000 from the GLA’s Opinion Research and Statistics team budget was approved in April 2021 through ADD2513. This was to extend the GLA’s online qualitative research platform for a further 12-month contract, up to May 2022. ADD2579 approved budget expenditure of up to £30,000 for a further two-year contract, from May 2022 to May 2024. Actual overall expenditure to date is circa £45,000.
- 1.8. This Decision form now seeks approval for expenditure of up to £20,000, from the GLA’s Opinion Research team budget, to contract the GLA’s online qualitative research platform for one year, from May 2024 to May 2025. If agreed, it will take total expenditure to a maximum of £65,000.
- 1.9. The contract will be procured via the reseller framework to ensure a compliant route to market for licenced software.

#### **2. Objectives and expected outcomes**

- 2.1. The objectives are:
  - to conduct online qualitative research with a variety of Londoners
  - to engage with Londoners from a broad range of target groups
  - to provide insight and evidence for policy teams, the Mayor and Assembly as needed.
- 2.2. The expected outcomes are:
  - the Opinion Research team can carry out varied qualitative research with a variety of Londoners

- the views and experiences of Londoners, particularly those who are hard to reach, inform policy and decision-making at City Hall.

### **3. Equality comments**

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Mayor and GLA are subject to the public sector equality duty and must have due regard to the need to:
  - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and
  - foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. The “protected characteristics” are age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage/ civil partnership status. The duty involves having appropriate regard to these matters as they apply in the circumstances, including having regard to the need to: remove or minimise any disadvantage suffered by those who share or is connected to a protected; take steps to meet the different needs of such people; encourage them to participate in public life or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low. This can involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without one.
- 3.3. Using a specialist platform is both the easiest and the most data-secure way of conducting research online, for both participants and moderators. The Opinion Research team are therefore able to conduct research with a wide range of Londoners – including those who have protected characteristics – unconstrained by individuals’ caring responsibilities, mobility, or location. Various other research approaches are used to engage Londoners who are not online, such as face to face focus groups as used with the creative development of the #Maaate campaign addressing Male Violence Against Women and Girls.
- 3.4. Use of the platform offers an inclusive and flexible approach.

### **4. Other considerations**

#### Key risks and issues

- 4.1. The key risk is that the technology for the platform will be unsuitable for the GLA’s needs or for use by Londoners (who possess varying levels of familiarity with technology). However, having used the research platform for 48 months, we are confident it meets our needs. The platform is designed for the specific purpose of engaging a range of participants and is thus very user-friendly. Customer support is on hand from the platform providers, if needed.

### Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.2. The Opinion research team has used the GLA online qualitative platform to deliver research to inform policy and programme development and evaluation for various Mayoral strategies. This includes the following:
- The London Environment Strategy where research through the platform collected awareness of retrofitting and reactions to the 'retrofit toolkit'. This research informed the development of interventions addressing the aim for London to be a zero-carbon city by 2050. It identified that Londoners were motivated to carry out retrofitting but needed more help to understand what retrofitting is and the actions they can take; and to provide financial support enabling them to do so.
  - Further research informed programme development for the London Environment Strategy objective for London to have the best air quality of any major world city by 2050. This research, with school leaders and Londoners, explored awareness, understanding and response to air quality alerts.
  - The Mayor's Universal Free School Meals Programme. Research, with parents, explored responses to communication to raise awareness of free school meals and pupil premium application forms. This research identified that communication needs to be short and not too detailed. Additional research, with parents, sought to understand the experiences of the rollout, to identify what is working with the programme and what needed additional support.
- 4.3. Overall, conducting qualitative research with a variety of Londoners will ensure that the GLA involves a broad constituency of people in our work. A format that is engaging and accessible to a wide range of people (i.e. online) will allow the Opinion Research team to engage with a variety of groups when conducting qualitative research.

### Consultations and impact assessments

- 4.4. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken. This procurement does not result in unequal outcomes to particular groups. However, each individual policy programme, considering using this platform, should review whether this is the best approach to address the research questions.
- 4.5. A Data Protection Impact Assessment has been completed to ensure use meets General Data Protection Regulation requirements.

### Declarations of interest

- 4.6. There are no conflicts of interest to declare for anyone involved in the drafting or clearance of this form.

## **5. Financial comments**

- 5.1. The Executive Director of Strategy and Communications' approval is sought for expenditure of up to £20,000 to procure the GLA's platform for a one-year contract from 2024-25. The cost of up to £20,000 will be funded from the Opinion Research team's cross-cutting budget for 2024-25, held within the City Intelligence Unit. There is sufficient budget in the 2024-25 plan to fund this request.
- 5.2. Details of previous expenditure are found at 1.6, above. Total cost incurred to date is £45,000.
- 5.3. The contract will be awarded via a reseller framework and will last one year, from May 2024 to May 2025.
- 5.4. The requested expenditure of up to £20,000 is based on the average cost, per year, of the most recent contract renewal. If agreed, this decision will take total spend over five years up to a maximum of £65,000.

## 6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Executive Director of Strategy and Communications concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further or which are facilitative of, conducive, or incidental to the promotion of economic development and the improvement of the environment in Greater London, and in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:
- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people;
  - consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the sustainable development in the United Kingdom; and
  - consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.2. In taking the decisions requested, the Executive Director of Strategy and Communications must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty; namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, and to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation) and persons who do not share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Executive Director of Strategy and Communications should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.
- 6.3. Officers have indicated at paragraphs 1.4 to 1.6 of this report that the services in respect of which it is proposed that a contract is to be awarded have been procured in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code.
- 6.4. Should the Executive Director of Strategy and Communications make the decisions sought officers must ensure that the procurement is conducted fully in accordance with the re-seller framework and the GLA and framework supplier enter into and execute all required call-off documentation before the commencement of the supply and services.

## 7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 7.1. The project will be delivered according to the following timetable:

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	May 2024
Delivery start date	May 2024
Delivery end date	May 2025

### Appendices and supporting papers:

None

**Public access to information**

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will be published either within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

**Part 1 – Deferral**

**Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO**

**Part 2 – Sensitive information**

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

**Is there a part 2 form? NO**

**ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:**

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

**Drafting officer:**

Yvette Smith has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

**Assistant Director/Head of Service:**

Click and insert name has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

**Financial and Legal advice:**

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

**Corporate Investment Board**

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Corporate Investment Board on 12 February 2024.

✓

**INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:**

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

**Signature:**



**Date:**

12/02/2024