

ESFA provision - Subcontracting Policy 2021

1. Introduction and purpose

Although the majority of Nine Dots provision is directly delivered by the Company there are instances where part of this provision may be sub- contracted to other training providers.

The purpose of this policy is to provide accurate and comprehensive information to external agencies on how Nine Dots procures its subcontracted services and the pricing framework used.

2. Scope and Context

The policy applies to all subcontracted provision supported with the funds supplied by the ESFA. The Subcontracting Policy is a mandatory requirement for subcontracting activity from 1st August 2014. The policy's content has been developed in line with the SFA Funding Rules.

3. Fairness in Procurement

Nine Dots will at all times undertake fair and transparent procurement activities. All opportunities for sub-contracted provision will be advertised and procured in accordance with Nine Dots Procurement Policy.

4. Due diligence

Nine Dots will undertake a robust process of due diligence when selecting potential subcontractors to ensure the highest quality of learning delivery is made available which demonstrates value for money and has a positive impact on the learner experience. Potential partners must complete and submit the prequalification questionnaire at the expression of interest stage. Through this process, Nine Dots will test the robustness of the provider to assess and mitigate any potential risk to Nine Dots that the provider may not be able to uphold the ESFA's requirements. This will include a review of financial robustness of the provider and their legal status.

5. Contracting arrangements

Successful partners will be issued with a legally binding contract eligible for one full year. It must be signed and witnessed by the subcontractor and Nine Dots. Terms and conditions will be agreed and included in the contract. Nine Dots and the ESFA are granted full permission and rights to monitor the quality of training being provided and visit the subcontractor at their premises, training sites or employers premises from which they operate.

The subcontract will reflect completely and accurately the ESFA Funding Rules with performance being assessed against the Common Inspection Framework. All subcontractors holding contracts will be on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers.

6. Improving quality

Nine Dots is committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning and the learner and employer experience across its provision and will work with the subcontractor to ensure continuous improvements are put in place across the range of provision offered. The following processes are in place to help monitor the quality of subcontracted provision and actively improve quality on an on-going basis:

- a robust schedule of quality assurance audits are carried out throughout the year
- annual reviews with target setting to include minimum success rates with all partners
- regular management meetings between Nine Dots and its subcontractors
- support for training and development of subcontractors and their employees
- regular support to ensure information, advice and guidance meets SFA requirements.

All subcontractors are required to undertake a self-assessment process in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework and produce a Self-Assessment Report (SAR). Nine Dots will support partners in this process and in the setting of clear targets for improvement.

7. Internal policies

Subcontractors are required to have robust internal policies to ensure compliance with legislative undertakings and general good practice and make certain that policies are regularly updated and effectively implemented, the requirements of which are identified in the contract.

8. Fees and charges

Nine Dots will make a charge of up to 15% of the full contracted value as a management fee. The costs cover the provision of:

- administration
- quality assurance
- MIS function relating to the submission of funding claims to the SFA
- provision of management meetings
- provision of professional advice regarding SFA funding matters
- due diligence support guidance and checking.

The subcontractor will be responsible for meeting the costs associated with the registration of candidates with awarding bodies and examination fees.

9. Payment

Payment to subcontractors will be made within 30 days of the invoice been received, subject to all necessary paperwork and records having been submitted within the required time scale. A checklist of key dates and deadlines for the paperwork to be received for inclusion in the return to the ESFA will be provided. Payment details are also included in the contract schedules issued to subcontractors at the start of the new contract year.

10. Policy review and communication

Nine Dots will review this policy annually. This review will take place in April of each year and any policy revisions will be completed and published prior to the commencement of the next SFA contract year. Any changes to the policy will be communicated to existing subcontractors at the contract management meetings. The policy will be discussed with new subcontractors prior to their engagement.