



Request for Proposal

For a strategic communications partner to work with Be the Business on our charitable mission to connect like-minded business leaders to curated expertise, inspiring them to create and deliver sustainable business change and greater productivity.

24 April 2023
Be the Business

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London
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Overview

We are looking for a strategic communications partner to support us with media relations and stakeholder engagement.

The following pages aim to give you context on our work, the projects we expect to undertake, and provide you with all the information you need in order to respond with a proposal, so that we might understand whether you could be a good fit to work with us.

We welcome any questions you have, and look forward to discussing your proposal further.

James Gribben
Head of Communications
Be The Business

Confidentiality Statement

The applicant will not disclose, divulge or impart to any third party, other than those designated in writing by Be the Business, any Information.

The applicant will not use any Information, in whole or in part, for any purpose other than preparing and submitting the RFP unless agreed beforehand, in writing, by Be the Business.

The applicant will only disclose Information to those of its employees and contractors as may be necessary to prepare and submit the RFP and will ensure that those employees and contractors comply with the terms of this confidentiality statement.

This duty of confidentiality will not extend to any Information to the extent that such Information at the time of receipt by the applicant was in the public domain; or after receipt by the applicant was made public by a third party acting without impropriety in so doing; or was in its possession before receipt from Be the Business and was acquired directly or indirectly from a source wholly independent of Be the Business, and the applicant can establish this by competent proof; or is required by law to be disclosed, provided that the applicant notifies Be the Business of such requirement as soon as reasonably possible after becoming aware of the same.

The provisions of this section will survive the RFP expiration or earlier termination of this RFP and continue to apply for a period of ten (10) years from the date of such expiration or earlier termination.

Terms and Conditions of this Proposal

In managing this procurement, the Buyer will endeavour to act fairly and reasonably in all its dealings with interested suppliers and Respondents, and to follow due process which is open and transparent.

This RFP does not commit Be the Business to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred in the preparations or submission of proposals, or costs incurred in making necessary studies for the preparation thereof or to procure or contract for services or supplies.

Be the Business reserve the right to cancel the RFP and any or all proposals may be rejected as a result.

Following submission of the proposals and their final evaluation, Be the Business reserves the right to retain unsuccessful proposals. It is the responsibility of the Vendor to identify any information of a confidential or proprietary nature contained in its proposal so that it may be handled accordingly.

Please make clear when giving any financial values whether it includes VAT or not. We would prefer that any monetary values are given free of VAT and VAT calculated separately.

If you have any questions or concerns about this proposal, please notify the Be the Business contacts outlined in Section 6 of this document.

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Section 1 – Introduction

Who are Be The Business?

Be the Business is a charity that inspires leadership teams to create and deliver sustainable business change and greater productivity.

We connect business leaders to curated expertise through:

- Connections to like-minded peers navigating similar challenges
- The inspiring corporate partner expertise found in our programmes
- Be the Business research, insights, events and tools
- Exposure to influential policymakers and localised support

We believe by bringing together companies big and small we collectively raise the value of business, employment security and standards of living across the UK.

Launched in 2017, Be the Business receives funding and support from the UK government and some of Britain's leading companies.

Why do we exist?

The UK's sluggish productivity growth has been one of the most persistent and pervasive economic challenges of the past decade. Between 1997 and 2020, the UK went from having one of the highest productivity growth rates in the OECD to one of the lowest (0.4% compared to OECD average of 0.9%) .¹ In 2019, UK productivity was around 15% below the US and France. The scale of the problem is also evident in the UK's global competitiveness, with the latest World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index (2019) in 9th place, three places lower than in 2016.

The UK also has a 'long tail problem'; the gap between the least and most productive firms in the UK is much bigger compared to other advanced economies. This gap means that the positive effect of the UK's most productive companies is offset by the low productivity firms that sit in the 'long tail'.²

While best practice in productivity is not complex – even small improvements in management practices have been observed to deliver a +5% uplift in productivity³ – we are bad at doing what we know is good. Indeed, the majority (92%) of SME leaders say measuring productivity is

¹ Source: ONS, OECD

² Source: Haldane: The UK's Productivity Problem: Hub No Spokes (2018)

³ Source: BEIS (2019) Business Productivity Review

important, but only half (52%) measure it, and many have never reviewed practice to identify areas of improvement.⁴ Overcoming this challenge will be crucial to unlocking the economic potential of the businesses currently stifling UK economic progress within the 'long tail'.

At the start of 2022 there were 5.47 million small businesses (with 0 to 49 employees), 99.2% of the total business population.⁵ This shows the importance on focusing on the productivity of SMEs. And SMEs are facing a range of challenges:

- Even before COVID-19, businesses were struggling with stagnant productivity, poor management practices, and low rates of technology adoption.
- Interest in and demand for business support services is low - and even when a business decides to actively invest in business improvement, they can struggle to find quality and impartial advice and services, and to know what questions to ask or where to get started.
- The business support ecosystem can be hard to understand. It is made up of a large number of mostly unconnected services which vary in quality. Support can be hard to find, there is no single entry point, and there are few clear pathways between different elements of support.

Be the Business exists as an impartial provider to help address these needs.

In the current economic and political climate, there is a strong focus on growth and it is expected that the majority of growth will come from productivity improvements. At Be the Business, we know what will move the needle – 75% of the UK's productivity gap can be closed by SMEs adopting proven management practices and business technology⁶.

What do we do and how do we help?

Our primary audience is the UK's small - and medium-sized business community, and everything we do is about connecting like-minded leaders to relevant expertise, inspiring them to create and deliver sustainable business change and greater productivity.

This is only possible with the support of Britain's most successful businesses which fund our work.

- Our flagship programmes provide tailored, in-depth support for business leaders:
 - [Be the Business Mentoring](#) pairs executives from successful businesses with ambitious leaders of smaller firms to tackle their business challenges.
 - [Be the Business Boards](#) matches business leaders with a small group of experienced senior executives from successful firms so that they can collectively share their expertise and insight with the business.

⁴ Source: Be the Business (2019) Productivity, Policy and Evidence

⁵ Source: UK Government (2022) Business population estimates for the UK and regions statistical release

⁶ Bryson et al (2018), The impact of management practices on SME performance

- We also partner with leading private sector companies to engage them in our work and the productivity agenda.
- We offer direct online support through our website, with business stories, [action plans](#) and [guides](#) all freely available .
- We also work with government and the business support ecosystem to help them understand the needs of the community, drive demand and rapidly implement effective programmes at scale.
- We publish [research](#) and studies from the frontline of small business, helping us to understand leaders and help them be more productive.
- We are truly by business, for business. Our success is based on crowding in the best of British business to provide resources and expertise and, showcasing replicable behaviours and practices in easy to understand and engaging ways

Section 2 – Our Communications Approach

What are we trying to communicate?

Our key messages

- Productivity remains the UK's biggest economic issue. We need long-term improvements in UK productivity in order to lessen the short-term impact of rapidly rising costs and inflation and to improve standards of living.
- While Government has a key role to play in creating the conditions for growth, the business community is best placed to drive some of the largest improvements to UK productivity.
- Be the Business' activity focuses on fundamental insights about productivity:
 - a) The gap between 'the best' firms in the UK and 'the rest' is significant but can be closed by taking business leaders on behaviour change journeys that lead them to adopt new ways of running their businesses that improves the capabilities known to have the strongest links to firm-level productivity:
 - Good management practices
 - Effective use of technology
 - Innovation activity
 - Use of modern HR practices
 - Operationally efficient processes
- All UK companies have a role to play in engaging other businesses on this issue: More productive SMEs create stronger, more resilient supply chains, and support the growth aspirations of larger firms.

What makes us different

- **We focus on cracking the demand side** – There is an abundance of support to help firms improve their performance, but it is not accessed by enough of the businesses that could benefit from it. The solution won't simply rely on introducing more supply - the "pull" element has been missing from all previous "push" attempts to improve performance and productivity. Understanding these firms as customers and individual business leaders, how to engage them, and what behaviour change will take, is at the heart of what we do.

- **We focus on leadership teams** – Much of the UK’s productivity opportunity comes from improving the capabilities of the people leading firms, and we seek to encourage them to undertake a continuous improvement mindset, one that encourages management behaviours proven to boost productivity. This in turn supports our aims to improve firm-level productivity.
- **We are evidence-based in our approach** – Research and insight inform all that we do, but we are practical and entrepreneurial rather than academic; we learn by doing and finding what works. In-person engagement provides a rich human understanding and prompts action in the business leaders we engage. Data (e.g. measuring engagement with digital campaigns, on-platform activity) provides understanding of the impact that drives continuous improvement among business leaders.
- **We crowd in and act as a convener for Britain’s leading companies to support the productivity movement** – Our foundations as a business-led not-for-profit, supported by government, mean we are uniquely placed to bring in private sector engagement and support. This enables us to amplify best practice: sharing knowledge from the best of British business with smaller businesses across the country.
- **We are open source and non-competitive** – We share our findings with government and the wider ecosystem to stimulate demand for business improvement in SME leaders, inform better policy, enable more effective engagement with SME leaders, and develop better methods to improve firm-level productivity.

Our audience

- **Our primary audience** for media relations and stakeholder engagement is in the boardrooms of corporate Britain. We want a strategy that makes these industry titans more open to working with us in order to boost the productivity of their business, their supply chains and their customers’ businesses (for B2Bs). This also applies to policymakers who have the levers to help incentivise change.
- **Our secondary audience** for a smaller proportion of our media relations time is small- and medium-sized businesses, helping to increase demand for business support services.

Considerations

Productivity is a key talking point for policymakers, politicians and economic commentators. The issue has salience and there’s a high level of interest in our approach to tackling the issue.

However, definitions of productivity vary greatly and the topic area is crowded. We differentiate ourselves by focusing on SMEs, the role of business leaders, and bringing together all businesses – big and small – with the aim of improving small business productivity.

Our USP is our access to a wider business network – including banks, industry bodies and FTSE 100 leaders – who can help propagate our work. It is important stakeholder relations and media activity supports these relationships.

Additionally, in the run up to a likely 2024 General Election, Ministers, officials and parliamentarians will have a tough job working out what to prioritise to ensure a sustained economic recovery, and how to design incentives and policy that stimulates business investment, upskills the labour market and delivers greater productivity. Being able to demonstrate real clarity of thought about the ideas Be the Business wants decision makers to consider will be important to build credibility with this audience.

Section 3 - This RFP

What is the purpose of this RFP?

We are looking for a response to this brief that combines media relations and stakeholder engagement support:

1. To excite large corporate businesses and prospective partners about our charitable mission, encouraging them to contribute to our activities to help improve the productivity of SMEs across the UK.
2. To bring our insight on firm-level productivity and behaviour change to Government, political parties and other relevant stakeholders.

Our budget is £10,000 per month plus VAT. We are looking for retained support for an initial 12-month contract.

What type of work would we like you to deliver?

We're looking for an agency to develop and support an integrated media and stakeholder engagement strategy to keep productivity at the top of the agenda, and drive brand recognition for Be the Business. This strategy should be supported by great tactical ideas, underpinned by methodical thinking about our message and our wide range of stakeholders. We are looking for a mix of senior advice with operational support on PR and stakeholder engagement, as well as monthly reporting against our objectives.

On media:

- We want to strengthen our relationships with national media with a greater focus on introductions, interviews, profiling and coverage of our research and reports
- We have a lot to say linked to the news agenda – we would like to increase our capacity to respond reactively to national topics of conversation.
- We would like a plan for the launch of our flagship research, our Productive Business Index (PBI), published twice per year
- We want to reach the media read and watched by prospective corporate partners
 - Initial focus on three sectors: Accountancy, Payment providers and Private Equity
- We are looking for strategic advice, opportunity spotting and horizon scanning, media outreach, content development (e.g. op-eds, press releases).

On Stakeholder engagement:

- We want to increase the reach and influence of our insights among key stakeholder groups. As part of this, we want to prioritise:

- Managing existing (and developing further) strategic relationships between Be the Business and members of the policy-making communities (ministers, shadow ministerial teams, officials, government departments, parliamentarians).
 - Identifying and responding to policy consultations and opportunities to influence policy on productivity.
- We want to engage more leading businesses to join our movement. This requires a strategy and engagement plan that includes:
 - Attendance/participation in a regular schedule of events, both Be the Business owned, and industry organised
 - Identify and plan at least 1 major set piece moment owned by Be the Business that raises profile with target audiences

Additionally

- We must be kept up to date on policy and political developments across the UK including debates, questions and select committee activities.
- We would like you to work with us to generate clear messaging about insights we generate, which engages target audiences in our work via production of policy briefing materials.

What would success look like?

After 1 month

- *Plan of activity for the year agreed, including key milestones and deliverables*
- *Working relationship well established*

After 3 months

- *Drumbeat of media coverage delivering:*
 - Minimum 1 piece of national coverage per month
 - Minimum 2 quality piece of trade coverage per month
 - Meetings arranged with minimum of 1 national journalist per month
- *Stakeholder engagement activity in full swing delivering:*
 - Min 2 meetings per month with senior stakeholders (ministers and shadow ministers) and other 1-on-1 meetings with political stakeholders, director level corporate contacts
 - Creative approach to engaging senior policy officials at HMT, DBT and DCMS operationalised

After 12 Months

- *Measurable increase in inbound requests for meetings/speaking ops with senior corporate teams*
- *Measurable increase in inbound media requests*
- *Increased registration rate for Be the Business stakeholder events*
- *Increase in awareness of Be the Business and corporate stakeholders*

How do we want to work with you?

As our needs are constantly evolving and we're relatively agile in how we work, we're looking for an impactful and collaborative relationship.

The successful partner will:

- **Act as an extension to our internal team** – we have a relatively small internal team of 4 (Head of Communications, Senior Communications Manager, Senior Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Communications executive) and we want to work with an agency that is more than just a supplier, but who can help provide a fresh perspective, challenge when necessary, add capacity and help us deliver impactful external communications.
- **Provide strategic advice, support and recommendations** – we are looking for senior level advisory counsel across media relations and public affairs, offering insight and recommendations on how best to engage with journalists, politicians and civil servants.
- **Delivery support** – we are seeking a proactive team able to pitch ideas and quickly lead of outreach and delivery across media relations and public affairs engagement.
- **Engage in a transparent, agile and collaborative way** – we want to combine structure and flexibility, and believe an agile process is the most effective way of doing so. We need to be responsive to changes, and need a partner who understand that priorities change.
- **Ensure our investment represents value for money** – we are a charity so any proposal needs to ensure value for money and be outcome focused.
- **Manage activity in flexible yet structured way** – we are looking for a partner to lead and manage weekly calls, bringing relevant insights and ideas in, while also keeping ongoing activity on track and following up on actions.

Please provide details on your ways of working, day rates, proposed team structure and bios of the team who would work with us within your response.

Section 4 - Your Response

What do we want you to provide in your RFP?

Your response must enable us to understand your business, your experience, your capabilities, your approach, and your cost structure.

Your response should be provided as answers to the series of questions below.

Please follow the structure as provided (although we encourage you to cross-reference wherever relevant), and provide links to references and external resources if required.

Please limit the length of your response to 20 slides or 15 pages of text.

Company overview

Introduce us to your organisation. Please include:

- What makes your organisation a good partner for Be the Business?
- What examples would you give of your relevant experience, and how you have worked with clients with similar needs in the past?
- What experience do you have working with public or charitable organisations, and delivering effective communication and engagement strategies for similar audiences and to similar standards?
- Any references or testimonials you can share from recent projects with similar ways of working?
- Where are you based, and how does your team operate (i.e. remote, on-site, how would you work with us?)
- Do you have any Diversity & Inclusion policies in place, what are they, and how do you currently measure against your targets?

Approach and ways of working

Describe the approach you would take to a partnership with us. Please include:

- What approach do you take with partners?
- How would you structure and manage work required, and why you have selected this approach?
- How do you manage variable requirements and capabilities for different tasks?
- How do you communicate and collaborate with partners?

- How might you help us develop our internal capabilities over the length of the relationship?

Team and relevant experience

Describe the resourcing approach you will take for the project. Please include:

- What is the team structure you would recommend and why you have selected this approach?
- Who are the proposed team members including relevant experience and key skills? Please provide biographies. Please note, we expect the team named in the response and present at any future pitch meetings to be the ongoing delivery team members.
- How would you scale your team / capabilities if we have short-term additional needs / requirements?

Meeting our objectives

Please set out in detail how you will approach our objectives and needs set out in this RFP:

- What is your approach to delivering an impactful media relations strategy over the next 12 months?
- What is your approach to delivering an impactful public affairs and stakeholder engagement strategy over the next 12 months?
- How do you approach creative ideas generation? Can you show us some ideas of how you think we can engage our key audiences in new ways leveraging the research and content we already have? (You may also include recommendations on new research and content where appropriate).
- How do you think we should raise our profile in the crowded space of productivity?

Fees and value for money

Outline your fees and how these represent value for money. Please include:

- What are your proposed rate cards for the team you have recommended?
- What will you deliver for the fees set out?
- How will you help us ensure value for money?
- This contract will operate on Be the Business's terms and conditions. Available on request.
- How to you resolve conflict between parties if it occurs?

Section 5 - Contract, Response Timings and Process

Contract Duration

We are looking for a long term relationship with a strategic partner. We would like to hear your approach for how you would like to work with us as part of your response. We are assuming we would initially enter into a 12 month relationship, with particular pieces of work taking place within this overall agreement. Please note that as a result of the way in which Be the Business receives its funding from government we would need to enter into an arrangement covering the current financial year with the intention to extend once our next tranche of funding is unlocked.

RFP Agenda

Date	Event
24/04/2023	RFP Published and released to market, Be the Business open to questions.
27/04/2023-05/05/2023	Availability for chemistry and Q&A sessions between bidders and Be the Business
17.00, 05/05/2023	Deadline for any questions about the RFP <i>Please submit any questions to james.gribben@bethebusiness.com</i>
09/05/2023	All answers to questions received shared with all bidders
12/05/2023 at 12:00	Response deadline. <i>Please submit an electronic copy of your proposal to james.gribben@bethebusiness.com</i>
16/05/2023	Selection of shortlisted applications and notification of applicants for pitch
24/05/2023 – 25/05/2023	Pitch meetings with shortlisted applicants.
26/05/2023	Meet the CEO, selection of preferred supplier, and start of contracting process

12/06/2023	Work starts
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Submission Deadlines

All responses must be received by 12:00 on 12 May 2023

Submission Delivery Details

RFP submissions responding to this request should be submitted by email to james.gribben@bethebusiness.com.

All electronic submissions must be in Portable Document Format (PDF).

Shortlisted bidders will be asked to present their approach on the 24th or 25th of May, either in person or by video conference.

The pitch meetings will last one hour 15 minutes. We'll ask shortlisted agencies to prepare a 30-minute presentation to include:

- Your proposed communications and public affairs strategy to meet the brief outlined in this paper (this can be a single idea, or overviews of a number of potential approaches)
- How the communications and public affairs activity will be phased across the 12-month initial contract term
- Proposed measurement criteria
- Your agency credentials and relevant team experience
- How you envisage working with Be the Business on a day-to-day basis
- Details on the team who will be leading and working on the account
- Your proposed budget for your planned activity

The meeting should be attended by those who will be servicing the account to enable us to get a sense of cultural fit.

The presentation will be followed by 45 minutes of discussion and questions.

If presenting in person, you will have access to AV. Please bring a laptop, a USB stick, and printouts of your presentation.

A copy of the presentation should be submitted to James Gribben, via email (james.gribben@bethebusiness.com), at least two days before the pitch date.

Submission Questions and Clarifications

You may contact the following people if you have any questions or require clarification on any topics covered in this document before the deadline on Friday 5 May 2023. Questions and responses will be collated and shared with all bidders on Tuesday 9 May 2023

James Gribben
Head of Communications
James.gribben@bethebusiness.com
07854 897974

Examples/References/Testimonials

Be the Business requires that you provide suitable references and testimonials from previous clients where you have conducted previous projects on a similar or greater scale (we will not limit the number but please submit at least one).

To be included with the above request, please include links to examples which we can access to see examples of your work.

Financial Credentials

The Vendor must be able to make available appropriate financial evidence in order to ascertain the financial stability and capability for taking on the scale and duration of this project.