**Consultant Specification for Steer Community Transport (Canolfan Maerdy) Dial-a-Ride Bus Scheme**

Applications by 15th June 2024

Canolfan Maerdy is a Company Ltd by Guarantee and a Charity, working across the Upper Amman, Swansea and Llynfell Valleys in South Wales. It provides, Community Transport (Steer) Food Poverty support (Maerdy Food Hub and Community Growing) Community Café, Registered full-day Childcare (Lots of Tots) and Youth Services (Maerdy Youth). All of its work is focused on meeting the needs of local residents and filling gaps in existing public sector, private or community provision.

Project Overview

We are developing and seeking to pilot a new Dial-a-Ride bus scheme, aimed initially, at providing transportation for residents from Upper Brynaman to Pontardawe. This initiative is intended to address the gap in public transport services at certain times of the day as the current X26 services are insufficient, often leaving passengers with no way to travel along our valley to the east. Steer - Community Transport, under the management of Canolfan Maerdy, will initially utilise a Section 19 Community Transport Permit for this project, however, it may be possible to move to another permit which allows some scheduled stops. We are looking to contract a Consultant or employ a Researcher to work alongside a full-time bus operator, Transport Manager and with a User/Steering Group to undertake a number of days of market and action research, contributing to planning, formative evaluation and the potential establishment of a sustainable service. A final Project Report embracing feasibility and options will be required.

The Project is funded via Strategic Prosperity Fund from UK Government and the pilot study must be completed by end December 2024. An overall amount of £9,000 is available for the research with additional small budget for marketing and events.

Objectives

1. Market Research: Understand the transport needs of the local community and the potential demand for the Dial-a-Ride service
2. Pilot Development: Design and implement a pilot Dial-a-Ride scheme, ensuring operational feasibility and addressing identified community needs.
3. Formative Evaluation: Continuously evaluate the service, gathering data to inform adjustments and improvements
4. Sustainability Assessment: Develop strategies for the long-term sustainability of the Dial-a-Ride service

Consultant Responsibilities

Market Research:

* Conduct surveys, focus groups, and interviews with residents of Upper & Lower Brynamman, Tairgwaith, GCG, and Cwmgors.
* Analyse current usage patterns and unmet needs of the existing X26 service.
* Identify key times of day and specific requirements for the new service.

Pilot Scheme Development:

* Work with the Steer - Community Transport and Canolfan Maerdy to establish a user/steering group and design and plan initial routes
* Develop a schedule that complements existing services and meets the identified needs.
* Work with a designated driver to trial routes and schedules that comply with relevant Community Transport Permit regulations.

Action Research:

* Implement the pilot service, collecting data on usage, reliability, and user satisfaction.
* Conduct regular reviews and make real-time adjustments based on feedback.
* Engage with community stakeholders to foster awareness and trust in the new service.

Formative Evaluation:

* Analyse data from the pilot service to assess performance and with Driver and the User/Steering Group identify areas for improvement.
* Prepare interim reports with findings and recommendations
* Develop case studies and success stories to illustrate the service’s impact.

Sustainability Planning:

* Assess the financial and operational viability of the Dial-a-Ride service.
* With User/Steering Group, develop a sustainability plan, including potential funding sources, partnerships, and operational models.
* Provide a final report with comprehensive analysis and recommendations for the continuation and/or expansion of the service.

Deliverables:

* Market Research Report: Detailed findings from community consultations and surveys.
* Pilot Scheme Plan: Comprehensive plan for the Dial-a-Ride pilot, including schedules, routes, and operational details.
* Interim Reports: Periodic updates on pilot performance, user feedback, and adjustments made.
* Final Evaluation Report: Comprehensive analysis of the pilot’s success, lessons learned, and recommendations for future actions, including consideration of the Strategic Sustainability with an outline of steps for ensuring the long-term viability of the Dial-a-Ride service.

Qualifications:

* Proven experience in at least one area of the following; public transport planning, community transport services, community profiling/development or related fields.
* Strong research and analytical skills, with experience in market research and data analysis.
* Excellent project management abilities, including planning, implementation, and evaluation.
* Effective communication and stakeholder engagement skills.
* Knowledge Community Transport Permit regulations is advantageous but not essential.

Timeline:

* Month 1-2: Conduct market research and initial community consultations.
* Month 2-3 Develop and launch the pilot Dial-a-Ride service.
* Month 3-5: Implement action research and formative evaluation.
* Month 6: Finalise evaluation and develop the sustainability plan.

**Application Process**
Those interested should supply a short submission including:

        1.      A brief proposal outlining approach, methodology and timeline.
        2.      Relevant experience and qualifications.
        3.      Examples of previous work in similar projects.
        4.      A detailed budget and fee structure.

**For further information or submission of applications please contact:**

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