BACKGROUND

MCS Charitable Foundation (MCS CF) has a vision of a world where everyone has access to affordable and reliable renewable energy.

Our mission is to accelerate the adoption of renewable energy and low carbon solutions across the UK.

MCS CF, which was established by the Government department BEIS, owns the MCS Company which runs the certification and standards scheme for renewable energy at domestic level. The Foundation uses surplus income from the certification scheme to invest in initiatives to grow and develop the sector.

STUDY OVERVIEW

MCS CF has a particular interest in consumer confidence and consumer information on renewable energy and energy efficiency. For consumers, the ability to gain independent advice is paramount.

A range of charities and organisations run information services to provide consumers with information, or to answer consumer questions, regarding particular technologies and the appropriate solution for their home or property. Many such services have cut back on the ways they provide information – or the geographical areas they cover – due to changes in funding arrangements in recent years.

Following feedback from stakeholders we are commissioning a scoping study to assess the services that are available, the robustness and accessibility of information provided and gaps in the types of information and demographics of householders that are covered.

The overall goal of the study is to inform MCS Charitable Foundation and the wider sector about the independent information and advice services available to consumers and enable informed decisions to be made about how service provision can best be improved. The main focus of the study is on pre-contractual information, with an emphasis on retrofit of existing domestic properties. The study will cover advice relevant to retrofitting delivered both through householder-funded initiatives and through fuel poverty focused schemes.

The study will build on existing literature and past studies relevant to these topics as well as carrying out primary research. It will include consideration of the situation in the devolved nations and regions in which there is a varying policy context.
Objectives:

- Identify the organisations that run consumer information and advice services and home assessments for renewable energy and energy efficiency, covering part or all of the UK.
- Review the extent to which information and advice provided across the range of technologies is up-to-date, comprehensive and robust.
- Assess the accessibility of the information services.
- Make recommendations for improvements in the services provided, which can be considered by the service providers, MCS CF and government.

Deliverables:

1. Set out the organisations that provide information and/or advice services and the geographical areas covered.
2. Make contact with these organisations and seek their buy-in to this study.
3. Catalogue the types of information and advice provided by different service providers, covering technology types and delivery media.
4. Request and analyse data from service providers on the numbers of people accessing the services, the topics covered and the impact the services have in supporting informed consumer decisions.
5. Review and analyse the information and services provided, through a combination of assessing online materials and acting as a ‘mystery shopper’. Consider the technical robustness, the range of technologies covered, the range of housing types covered and the consumer accessibility/customer service.
6. Interview or survey representatives of the service delivery organisations to gain their view on the improvements needed in this consumer information sector and the resources required by the sector as a whole to deliver this.
7. Set out what improvements are needed so consumers across the UK can easily access independent and technology-neutral advice. Recommendations should encompass changes that could be made within the existing resources of the sector, and also improvements that could be made with further funding from sources such as MCS CF, other funding bodies or government.
8. Provide updates to MCS CF throughout the project period.
9. Write up a report encompassing all of the deliverables and culminating in recommendations for improvements to the provision of consumer information and advice.

It is envisaged that the study will take around 40 days of work.

The work is to be delivered within six months of being commissioned.
The consultant will:

- Have a strong up-to-date working knowledge of the range of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures that can be applied at domestic level, their relevance to different household types and their impacts on carbon reduction.
- Have an understanding of the public policy context relating to energy efficiency and renewable energy, at both a UK-wide level and in the devolved nations and regions.
- Bring expertise in good practice in consumer information and advice.
- Demonstrate experience in collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data to draw informed conclusions.
- Show experience of delivering projects of a similar scale, working on their own initiative.
- Be independent of organisations that currently provide consumer information and advice services.

Application process

Applications are welcome from individuals or organisations. To apply to carry out the work, please submit a letter and CV outlining how your experience and knowledge meet the criteria outlined above, the approach you would take to the role and what you would charge to deliver the work.

Applications should be submitted to lisa@mcscharitablefoundation.org by 12noon on Wednesday 18th December. Please also get in touch if you have any questions on the brief ahead of the deadline.

Shortlisted applicants will be interviewed in the week commencing 6th January 2020.