



Skills, Employment, Enterprise &
innovation for growth

Partner with Ixion



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Dear Provider

We are pleased to provide this handbook to prospective delivery partners to assist them in joining the Ixion Supply Chain Network.

Over the past five years Ixion has changed dramatically, from being primarily a Business Link contract management organisation in the East of England, into a diversified provider delivering; skills, employment & Welfare to Work, reducing re-offending, business start-ups, veterans support, consultancy on UK & European Research & Development consortia and other business support services, with operations across the country.

Ixion has nearly quadrupled turnover to over £20 million a year, built a strong and sustainable financial base, strong governance and infrastructure, and a reputation as a high performer, with integrity that achieves targets and contractual outcomes.

In order to become a provider of choice for commissioners, we believe that strong partnerships with organisations can support our growth and extend our reach. Strong partnerships and supply chains are the product of flexible and innovative approaches to meeting customer needs. To deliver excellent results for our clients and customers we bring together expertise from a variety of partners, from the public, private and third sector organisations.

Our Supply Chain Network is designed to meet the needs of customers and the strategic aims of our commissioners, so we can be flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the key markets and priority customer groups. Ixion will also enrich this network by engaging a range of specialist support services to provide niche provision and services.

In November 2017 Ixion were delighted to achieve an overall **'Excellent'** Merlin Standard accreditation for promoting supply chain excellence, therefore we look forward to developing our relationship with your organisation as a potential Partner to Ixion as we continue our journey of excellence in our Supply Chain Management.

I am also delighted that as of June 2017, Ixion became part of the major UK Charity, The Shaw Trust, who became Ixion's sole shareholder.

We hope this handbook will provide prospective partners a fuller understanding of how to join the Ixion Supply Chain Network, what we are looking for in our delivery partners and how we will support our network to ensure we deliver the best possible results for our customers and clients.

We look forward to working with you.

Kind Regards **John Govett**

Group Chief Executive - Ixion Holdings (Contracts) Ltd

1. Overview

1.1 Introduction to Ixion Holdings (Contracts) Limited

Ixion is a not-for-profit group of companies that is wholly owned subsidiary of The Shaw Trust.

Ixion operates with an entrepreneurial spirit to strong commercial principles but we are guided by a strong moral compass. We have a vision to "transform people lives through Skills, Employment, Enterprise and Innovation, for growth".

As your strategic partner in a fast moving world, Ixion will give you the support and know-how you need to achieve your goals. In short, we empower you to achieve your full potential in life. Our size, portfolio of skills services and passion for knowledge allow us to provide comprehensive solutions for your business. We have practical, academic and industry expertise to help take your organisation to the next level.

Our passion is about taking on immense challenges that matter to our customer and clients. We work in partnership with: a range of small, medium and large enterprises, we work with and help local economic partnerships, town and district councils, governmental departments and regional authorities. We help create growth.

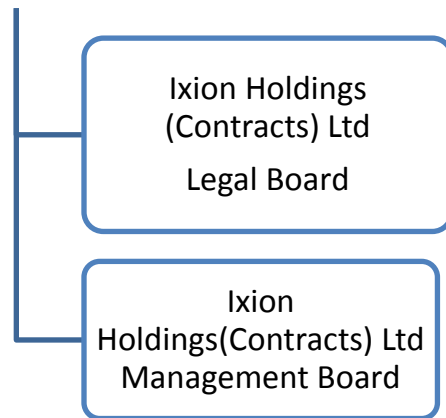
We treat our customers and clients the way we treat our colleagues. We build upon their strengths and develop their weaknesses at every level and every opportunity. In this way we build sustainability. By getting to the real issues we are able to offer practical solutions. We bring out the capabilities of our customers and clients, enabling them to continue the process of improvement and increasing profits.

Ixion's supply chain network is a vital part of the organisations delivery strategy. In recruiting and selecting our supply chain partners we put fairness, honesty and transparency at the heart of our approach to subcontracting.

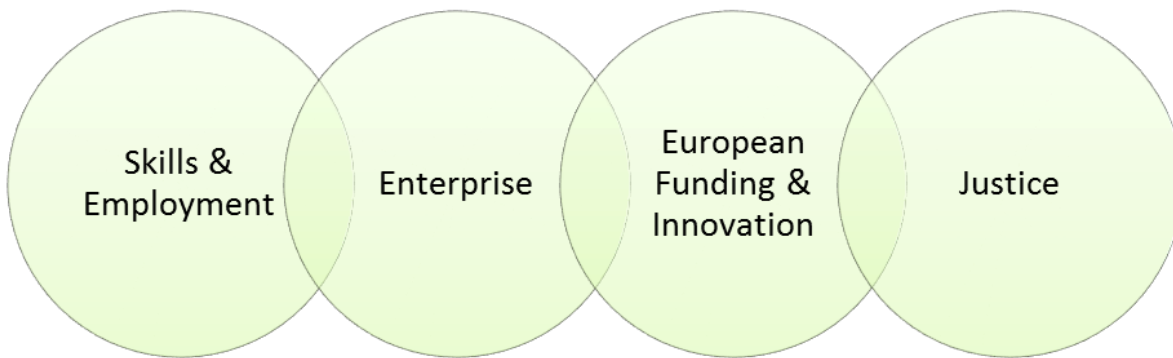
This handbook has been designed to assist organisations who are considering submitting an Expression of Interest to deliver services in partnership with Ixion. It sets out the roles and responsibilities of Ixion and our delivery partners, defining what we expect from our partners and what our partners can expect from us.

We hope that this guide will enable potential partners to: make an informed decision about the information they submit, fully understand what we are looking for, and learn how we work alongside our partners to deliver excellent services.

1.2 About Us



OPERATIONAL DIVISIONS



Education & Skills
Funding Agency



HM Prison &
Probation Service



DWP

Department for
Work and Pensions



1.3 Our Vision & Values

Vision

“Transform people’s lives through Skills, Employment, Enterprise and Innovation, for growth”

Values



- **Future: Forward Thinking** – Ixion adopts clear business strategies to give a focused vision for the Company’s future.
- **People: Inspiring** – Our people and customers are core to everything we achieve and our not-for-profit social purpose inspires them to achieve excellence in all that they do. Our people are valued, empowered and involved.
- **Outcome: Successful** – By focusing on performance, trust and respect, we will win business to sustain and grow. We will provide exemplary customer service, listening to customer needs and continuously improve the customer experience.
- **How: Simpler, Faster & Personal** – Our systems, processes and behaviours enable personal, efficient and effective action on the part of our people, partners, customers and stakeholders.

The basic principles and values for Supply Chain Management that underpin the above company values are:

- Driving high performance and continuous improvement
- Being flexible and pro-active towards collaboration
- To be professional and act with integrity
- Be honest, open and transparent with all partners
- To be respectful and willing to make changes

1.4 Expectations

Operating within its own Supply Chain Management Framework (see 1.6) Ixion makes a commitment to its partners to deliver services in line with the Merlin Standard (see 1.5). This applies from the point of Expression of Interest to work with Ixion through to delivery of services.

Ixion will:

- Utilise public, private and third sector organisations to enrich its supply chain to address the needs of commissioners' and customers'
- Ensure that opportunities to become a delivery partner are advertised and communicated across our supply chain network
- Communicate with partners in a proactive, timely and clear manner within a culture that is open and honest
- Ensure that all new business opportunities are clearly defined and explained
- Support and encourage the development of all supply chain partners, and identify additional funding streams to build partners capacity to deliver services
- Ensure that proposed market share is communicated, the funding and payment arrangements are fair, proportionate and do not cause undue financial risk for partners
- Ensure that all documentation and financial information clearly defines the obligations of both Ixion and its partners
- Provide a named Ixion contact through all stages of the process to becoming a delivery partner, and ensure regular feedback at all stages
- Provide support during the 'on boarding/implementation' stage to ensure partners will be ready to begin delivering services on behalf of Ixion
- Support our partners throughout all stages during delivery through our supply chain team and through sharing best practice within the partner network

Ixion would expect all delivery partners during the initial stages of the Supply Chain Management Framework to:

- Ensure timely and accurate completion/submission of all requested documentation
- Ensure that proposals to deliver services are based against robust delivery models and capacity to deliver outcomes set out during the tendering stage
- Ensure that proposed models for payments are fully understood in order to make an assessment of the viability of the contract
- Respond to requests made by Ixion in a timely manner and within the tender /mini competition timescales
- Ensure that all recruitment, premises, checks and documentation as outlined in the implementation plan are completed within the agreed timescales
- Commit to achieving the targets and KPIs agreed between Ixion and delivery partners
- Provide a high quality service that meets the changing needs of the customers/clients
- Act with integrity, honesty and transparency at all times

1.5 The Merlin Standard

The Merlin Standard has been developed by DWP in conjunction with the welfare to work sector and others, and sets out to ensure that subcontracting arrangements between primes and delivery partners are positive and fair. Primes are assessed against a set of principles to ensure partners are treated fairly throughout all the stages of the subcontracting process.

We use the four Merlin principles in our approach to **supply chain design**, our **commitments** to our delivery partners, how we work (**conduct**) with partners and our approach to **reviewing** our activities in order to promote supply chain health.

Ixion is committed to the principles of Merlin Standard and we believe that following them will allow us to maintain more effective relationships with our partners, which will in turn ensure we deliver high quality joined up provision and service for our customers.

In November 2017 Ixion were assessed for the second time against the Merlin Standard and we were delighted to achieve an overall 'Excellent' score of 87%. A summary of the assessment outcomes are as below:

Overall Outcome	87% Excellent
Supply Chain Design	93% Excellent
Commitment	88% Excellent
Conduct	87% Excellent
Review	80% Good

A full copy of the report is available on: <http://merlinstandard.co.uk/accredited-organisations/>

1.6 The Ixion Supply Chain Management Framework

The Supply Chain Management Framework has been developed using Merlin Principles to support Ixion to procure and maintain excellent and positive relationships with partners in a creative and innovative way ensuring maximum flexibility. In as much as the Merlin Standard has been designed to recognise and promote sustainable excellence and partnership working within supply chains and provide guidance to those seeking to achieve it, Ixion has implemented its Supply Chain Management Framework to ensure it aligns to the four integrated and fundamental Merlin principles; Supply Chain Design, Commitment, Conduct and Review.

The framework will assist in the identification of need for subcontracted delivery, the selection of partners in an open, fair and transparent way and the qualitative, financial and relationship management of partners throughout the life of their contract with Ixion.

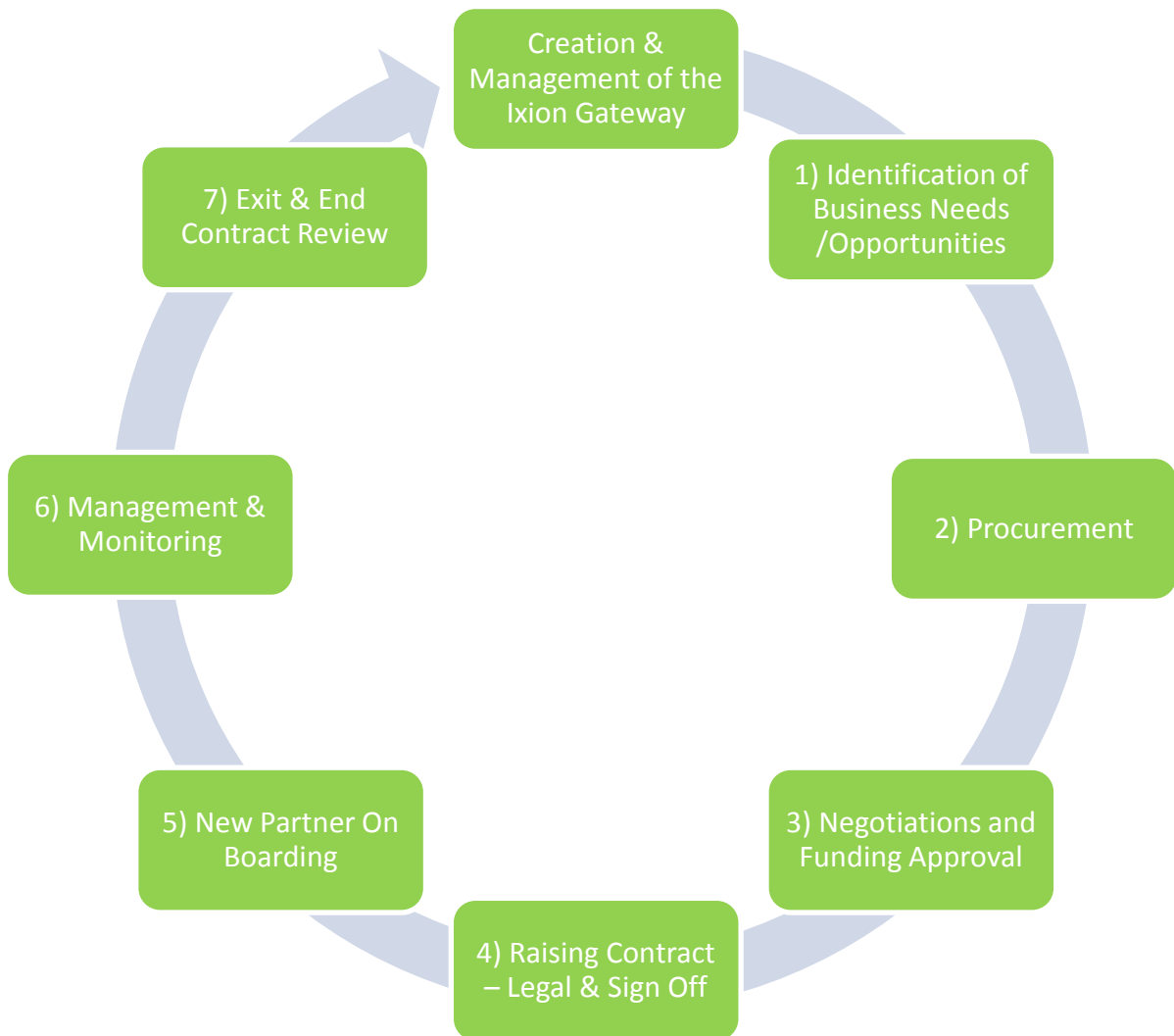
The Supply Chain Management Framework, in addition to addressing every step in the process of subcontracting, also reviews the role of commissioning, including the procurement process and how the supply chain behaviour is affected by the behaviour of Ixion. The framework aligns to each element of the four Merlin Principles ensuring a clear process flow is set out for each. All associated documentation is included or referenced in the framework for ease of use.

The aim of the framework is to set a consistent standard for the management of partners across the Ixion Group and thereby drive the behaviours required to operate to the benefit of the funding body providing value for money at every stage.

In support of the Merlin Principle “Commitment” to develop supply chain partners and to inform them how they will be procured, managed and monitored, a version of the framework is available for distribution and stored on the Ixion Gateway Portal to evidence and drive the partner communication.

If you feel you wish to raise a specific complaint about Ixion’s non compliance with the Merlin Standard principles within the Supply Chain Management Framework, please see Complaints and Dispute Resolution Process detailed in annex A at the rear of this framework.

1.6.1 Overview of the Supply Chain Management Framework



2. The Ixion Supply Chain Network

2.1 Growing our Network

Through the Ixion Gateway Portal, Ixion has a 'bank' of vetted organisations from the private, public and third sector from which Ixion are able to identify high quality supply chain partners to deliver provision and specialist service alongside Ixion when bidding opportunities arise.

As part of Ixion's Supply Chain Management Framework, once a bidding opportunity has been identified by Business Development or a Sponsor, a proposal is submitted to the Ixion Management board and as part of this it will include the rationale/need for partners to deliver the services and/or provision and also what percentage market share is proposed to be subcontracted.

We are looking for new, dynamic and innovative organisations to join our network that will complement and support Ixion's Vision and Values (see page 6). As a Merlin Standard accredited organisation, Ixion will provide clear, consistent and timely communication throughout the full cycle of our partnership. Using the Ixion Gateway Portal this will include regular policy updates from the Welfare to Work, Skills, Enterprise and Criminal Justice sectors. Through the Portal Ixion will also promote tendering and funding opportunities.

2.2 How do organisations join the Network?

Organisations will first need to complete a simple high level Expression of Interest which Ixion will use to review your organisation against a number of headings:

- Your organisation- tell us key organisation and contact details
- Provision/Delivery – tell us about the organisations capacity to deliver different types of provision /services in areas such as Welfare to Work, Accredited Skills, Enterprise and Criminal Justice
- Customer groups – your experience of delivering provision and services to particular priority groups
- Infrastructure – give us details of your organisations capacity to deliver and respond to growth
- Experience – tell us about the types of provision/service you deliver; be that accredited qualifications, business advice, mentoring, IAG or other services
- Quality – this will cover your organisations ability to deliver a quality service in terms of accreditations, quality standards and compliance. We will also ask for confirmation that your organisation has its own policies for Health & Safety, Quality Assurance, Equality & Diversity, Safeguarding, Environmental & Sustainability, Complaints and IT /Data Security
- Recent Performance – to request information about previous contracts delivered and performance against these targets

All information submitted as part of the application process by organisations is kept in strict confidence

2.3 What are we looking for in the Expression of Interest (EOI)

What we would like to see:

- Every section to be completed in full
- A good track record of delivery and improving performance
- Full details of capacity to deliver i.e., infrastructure
- The Services on offer clearly defined
- Assurances concerning good compliance (internal and external) and quality track record
- Responsiveness, innovation and creativity

What will make an EOI unsuccessful?

- Failure to complete all sections properly
- No previous experience/track record of delivering the provision/service applied for
- No evidence of quality standards or compliance
- Unsatisfactory performance record
- Inaccurate information

If you are unsuccessful with your Expression of Interest with Ixion, we will provide constructive feedback on the reasons so that this does not prevent your organisation from making an application to join the Supply Chain Network again in the future, once the points for development have been addressed.

Please note that success at the Expression of Interest stage does not guarantee the potential partner a contract with Ixion Holdings.

2.4 Applications & Due Diligence

If your Expression of Interest is accepted, you will be asked to complete a fuller application and submit your organisations information through the Ixion Gateway Portal in order to commence the initial due diligence process. The Application will include:

Organisational Detail

All parts must be completed in full including details of any group/subsidiaries and provide references to support the application.

Provision/Service Delivery Experience

We must ensure that all organisations we select to join the Network have the capacity and necessary experience to deliver specific elements of the delivery model. It is important to outline which industries /sectors you have experience of delivering to and for, so that we can assess these against the varied delivery models we commission against. It is also

important to clearly state whether you are delivering an 'end to end' provision therefore supporting customers throughout their time on a programme or a specialist/niche service that is part of a customer journey which may be a priority for the commissioner.

Target Customer Groups

As our partner network grows, it is important to have a mix and balance of experience in working with a wide range of different customer needs to meet the requirements of the funding body/commissioner. We will seek to partner organisations that have experience of delivering specialist services to priority groups which Ixion has not worked with or has less experience. Those applying should list all customer groups to whom they have delivered specific provision/services or tailored provision.

Infrastructure

As part of the application process it is important that we are able to map each region to ensure that between Ixion and its supply chain we can have complete coverage of an area we are intending to win new business. You must also identify which sites are permanent premises and which are outreach.

Quality, Health & Safety and Safeguarding

We will require all potential delivery partners to provide evidence of recent inspections, accreditations, audits and also share its key corporate policies to assess the capability of the organisation and ensure the content of those policies is at least commensurate to Ixion's own. As part of the process we will look at the quality improvement processes your organisation has in place. We would expect all our partners to support the Living Wage 2017 and also adhere to the requirements placed on organisations regarding the Modern Slavery Act 2015

Finance

We will assess the last three years audited management accounts and require details of company directors in order to undertake a company search. We will also need proof of both public/employer liability insurance and professional indemnity insurance.

Recent Performance

Within the application we ask all organisations to list the services/provision they have most recently delivered in contracts, who commissioned the contract, and how they performed against the relevant performance targets. We will be looking for a good track record in performance across all contracts. If any contracts have been withdrawn or 'handed back' by/to the commissioner, we would require an explanation of the reasons.

When your application and supporting evidence have been fully appraised by our team, whether accepted or not we will always provide full feedback on the outcome of the assessment/due diligence. This will include identifying areas of good practice we have recognised in your application as well as any areas for development through the on boarding process.

3. Procurement and Mini Competitions

Once your organisation has been confirmed on the Ixion Gateway Portal, you will start to receive adverts for new opportunities to deliver services on Ixion's behalf – becoming part of our supply chain. Opportunities will be in the form of a contract specification (which will be based on the commissioner's specification to which Ixion will respond), and will detail the opportunity and the services/provision we are looking for partners to deliver.

If the business opportunity is a new programme, Ixion will devise a delivery model that we believe is most suited to the requirements of the commissioner. Ixion will share and consult for feedback on our strategy and proposed delivery model with our potential supply chain partners, discussing the elements that Ixion intend to deliver and where we think provision or a service delivered by a partner will be most effective.

When completing responses to competition specification, it is important that organisations give careful consideration to all questions asked and the information that we require potential partners to submit. Examples of what we look for in a response are:

Clear evidence of capability to deliver specification requirements of the contract

- Close attention to the question and the information requested
- Statistics and examples to back up particular points
- Naming employers, stakeholders and strategic partners with whom partners have links
- Making answers to questions local and in context to the geographical area that is being applied for
- Evidencing creative and innovative delivery and interventions

As part of our Supply Chain Management Framework, we have a competition response evaluation form with a tailored set of scoring criteria which we will mark all applications. Each completed section will be scored against this criteria and proportionate weighting allocated to each section. These scores will be combined with the EOI assessment to form a shortlist and feedback to all applicants will be provided.

Successful organisations will be those who answer each question in full, can evidence relevant and successful experience of delivery (particular services or client groups), and have appropriate infrastructure, expertise and knowledge.

4. Agreeing principle terms with selected Partners

Once we have evaluated all responses against the tender specification and identified the most suitable organisations to join our supply chain, Ixion will begin the process of discussing principle terms with those selected. The dialogue will principally be outlining the delivery expectations of both parties and agreeing the provision/service delivery and financial terms.

4.1 What does Ixion Management Fee include?

Our management fee (variable across contract/provision types) covers the support that we provide for our deliver partners while they are delivering services on our behalf. This support comes in the form of:

- Dedicated Single Point of Contact Supply Chain Management
- Quarterly (as a minimum) Face to Face Review Meetings with Performance Reporting
- Regular Management Information
- Quarterly Partner Forums to share best practice
- IT - access and systems training (where required)
- Communications- Joint Marketing & Media enquires
- Quality Assurance visits including support and guidance for:
- Contract Support & Funding Compliance
- Observations of practice
- Policy Development
- Staff Training & Development Inc. online learning and webinars
- Annual Self-Assessment and QIP support
- Customer and stakeholder engagement
- Information Security and Data Control
- Self-Billing Process
- Advice on Safeguarding, Prevent, Equality & Diversity and Sustainable Development
- Advice on Management of Health & Safety
- Updates of National Funding and Policy guidance
- HR - Guidance & Support where TUPE applies

4.2 Partner Communication

We believe that effective communication and collaboration within our supply chains underpins effective and positive partnership working. As a Prime Provider Ixion are committed to ensuring that all our partner communications are clear, consistent and timely during the full life of the contract and upon termination of that contract.

Written contractual communications between Ixion and our partners will in the main be directed through the Ixion Gateway Portal which is our web based system and those registered as users for the site will receive e-mail alerts that correspondence or actions are pending and awaiting response. Retrospectively partner communications in to Ixion will also be held on the Portal rather than individual staff e-mail accounts ensuring an audit trail. The Portal allows us to also make suppliers aware of new funding opportunities, contractual updates and changes and send invitations to partner forums and webinar events.

Each operational division within Ixion will hold a calendar of Partner Forums at contract level to ensure there are opportunities for collaboration, identifying excellent and good practice, receiving feedback and looking at performance as a supply chain. We will also look collectively at a contract level look at how we as a Supply Chain Network are delivering 'Value for Money' for our commissioner/funders. At a group level, we deliver a series of partner webinars which includes professional updates and sharing of best practice on the cross cutting themes of Health & Safety,

Equality & Diversity, Environmental & Sustainability, Data Security and the Supply Chain Management Framework. Further webinar content will be developed based on feedback from our partners. A calendar of Divisional Partner Forums and Webinar events is available from your Supply Chain Manager.

5. Implementation / 'On boarding' plan

Following confirmation of bid success from the funding body/ commissioner, Ixion will commence the process of contacting all relevant delivery partners to begin the implementation process, this will include:

- Agreeing a Kick Off Meeting
- Named Point of contact
- Site Visits/Checks
- Complete any outstanding actions for due diligence on the Portal
- Induction training
- IT support
- Contracting/Service Level Agreement
- Agree Scheduling of all Monitoring Meetings

6. Management & Monitoring

Once the implementation process is complete, partners will commence delivery. You will have been allocated a named Supply Chain Manager who will be your lead contact throughout the life of the contract.

The Supply Chain Manager is at the heart of our partner support process and any changes to the contract and queries will be directed through them. Ixion will work alongside all our delivery partners to ensure the level of support you receive will be suitable for the size of the organisation, the number of customers that you are expected to support, your level of experience and your delivery role. Again, supporting Merlin Standards we will work in partnership with you to ensure all communications are conducted in an open and collaborative way.

Within our supply Chain Management Framework, we have set processes to ensure all partners are managed appropriately to maintain high standards to achieve contractual targets throughout the lifetime of the contract with Ixion. Through an effective monitoring process, risk will be identified at the earliest opportunity and reported in an agreed process in order that funding and success are protected at every opportunity for both Ixion and our partners.

From the outset, all partners will have an agreed schedule of monitoring visits that will encompass both audit and compliance to contract and funding body/commissioner requirements.

The compliance and audit team provide an independent audit function to monitor and evaluate the quality of service provided to clients and stakeholders by ourselves and our delivery partners. This team monitors contract compliance and informs the business with regards to risk.

7. Contract Review & Exit

Recognising that all contracts have a life cycle, within the Supply Chain Management Framework there is a full contract review and exit process. It is important to Ixion that we continually evaluate our own effectiveness and efficiencies of supply chain management so that we can learn and develop our practices. Our Review process fully incorporates all the key end of contract actions that will ensure both Ixion and our partners meet all their contractual obligations.

We will always undertake evaluation reports at the conclusion of our contracts on behalf of our commissioners /funders and share summaries of our evaluation with other important key stakeholders, so that the experiences of both Ixion and our Partners can inform future procurement and delivery models for provision.

For Further Information

www.ixionholdings.com

For information regarding our Supply Chain Management Framework:

<http://www.ixionholdings.com/supply-chain-partners>

For information regarding best practice for Supply Chain Management and to view the full assessment report, please visit:

www.merlinstandard.co.uk