

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2701

Provision of online job-postings data (2024-26)

Executive summary:

This decision requests approval for expenditure of up to £62,830 for a GLA subscription to Lightcast online job-postings data for two years (1 July 2024 to 30 June 2026). Used alongside traditional sources, this near-real-time information can track and assess job-vacancy trends in London, providing granular information on the demand for jobs and skills. Continued access to this data is vital to support the effective planning and delivery of adult skills provision in London. In particular, this data has been used to support the Mayor's Skills Academies and Bootcamp programmes. As well as informing GLA policy decisions, it is used to produce high-quality labour market information to support key stakeholders, including skills providers and careers advisers.

Decision:

That the Interim Executive Director of Strategy and Communications approves expenditure of up to £62,830, to renew subscription access to local online job-vacancy data for two years (1 July 2024 to 30 June 2026).

AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Luke Bruce

Position: Interim Executive Director,
Strategy and Communications

Signature:



Date:

14/06/2024

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 A strategic approach to commissioning and delivery of skills-related programmes requires access to high-quality and easily accessible labour market information (LMI) to be used for strategic work such as the Skills for London for example.¹ Better LMI can improve the alignment between the skills that employers demand and those that people have. This, in turn, can lead to better outcomes for individuals and businesses.
- 1.2 To support this aim, the GLA has, in recent years, purchased subscription access to online job-postings data (see, for example, [DD2591](#)). This data directly indicates the demand for jobs and skills in the capital, rather than relying on indicators of demand at the occupation level. It has several key advantages over traditional sources of LMI, including in terms of timeliness and granularity.²
- 1.3 In the last year, GLA officers used access to online job-postings data for:
- the Mayor's Skills Academies programme, to understand the skills gaps linked to priority sectors; this includes the common and specialised skills in demand in each priority sector, and for particular occupations within each sector
 - the Wave 5 prospectus of the Bootcamp programme, to understand the skills (both common and technical) in demand; and to guide provider responses to those skills
 - quality-mark event presentations for priority sectors, hosted by the GLA
 - experimental analysis of retrofit job postings – including trends in online job postings; top titles in demand; and common/transferable and specialised skill
 - regular LMI to monitor, and inform stakeholders about, economic trends in London; activity includes quarterly updates on [online job postings](#) and analyses of [green jobs and skills](#) postings
 - granular information on demand for occupational skills, to support the development of skills and employment policy and programmes
 - presentations and [infographics](#) on skills needs in priority sectors, to share LMI with skills providers and to support careers information and guidance.
- 1.4 Other sources of labour-demand information, including the Department for Education Employer Skills Survey 2024, lack a sufficiently large sample to support a reliable and robust analysis of regional trends.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 It is proposed that £61,000 (plus 1-3 per cent reseller fee) of funding be used to renew the GLA's subscription to Lightcast (formerly Emsi Burning Glass) online job-postings data, running from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2026. This is in line with the objectives approved in [DD2591](#).
- 2.2 Used alongside traditional sources, this near-real-time information can track and assess online job-postings trends in London. As noted, it provides granular information on employer demand for jobs

¹ Mayor of London, [Skills for Londoners](#), June 2018

² Real-time, web-scraping data has several key advantages over traditional sources of labour market data. The data can be accessed and updated frequently; it includes a large volume of data with coverage across the country; and it offers a wide range of information besides occupation (or job title), including desired skills, location and salary.

and skills (both specialised and transferable) in the capital. This subscription will therefore allow GLA officers to continue sharing useful data and information to support effective planning and delivery of adult skills provision in London.

2.3 It is expected that GLA Economics officers will use this data to:

- update existing outputs to ensure the GLA can access timely information on the local labour market and skills needs
- undertake additional analysis and/or deep dives into areas of particular interest – for example, around skills needs in priority sectors
- produce materials that disseminate the latest data to relevant stakeholders, including skills providers and careers advisers.

2.4 The current GLA subscription with Lightcast will expire on 30 June 2024. Under advice from Transport for London (TfL) Procurement, GLA officers will run a competitive tender using a reseller process. This allows our preferred provider, Lightcast, to provide quotes to the resellers directly. Resellers add a 1-3 per cent fee to the cost; but the lowest quote provided will be selected. Lightcast and the reseller would sign the contract, but all interactions between the GLA and Lightcast will be the same as under previous contractual arrangements. The reseller approach allows a competitive procurement process for a preferred provider; and can be completed over a shorter period compared to other approaches, such as the Request for Quotation process.

2.5 The GLA Economics team reviewed the offer from both Lightcast and another potential provider, Adzuna. While Adzuna improved their service compared to previous years, Lightcast was still found to be the optimal provider based on the following:

- platform usability – search customisation options are simpler
- data exports are easy to extract, and well labelled and structured
- bespoke searches for niche areas such as retrofit can be undertaken in Lightcast
- Lightcast taxonomies and skills classifications are very detailed and well documented
- data and methodologies are available online (via FAQ) for Lightcast
- access to the raw postings text through the Lightcast platform improves data transparency; and allows for better-quality assurance assessments as part of analysis.

2.6 In particular, a key aspect of the analysis produced by GLA Economics uses Lightcast's application programming interface (API). Access to Lightcast's job-posting data through the API enables integration with core data analysis and visualisation tools (such as R, Python, etc). The API also permits much more efficient, large-scale data extraction; and more nuanced research that cannot be performed within the online platform. Given the efficiency and ease of reproducibility it allows, the API has been central in producing both the standardised quarterly reports produced by GLA Economics, and the detailed priority-sector analysis produced for a range of internal and external stakeholders. Additionally, compared to other providers, Lightcast's API is particularly well developed and documented, making it accessible to a wider range of potential researchers within the GLA.

2.7 Lightcast continues to best address our work requirements, especially at a time when labour market data is becoming more essential to present reliable and timely information on London's economy.

Therefore, Lightcast offers greater value for money while meeting our requirements in terms of access to high-quality and granular data³.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1 In carrying out any functions in respect of his skills and employment programmes, the Mayor will comply with the public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.2 Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the GLA must have 'due regard' of the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 3.3 The evidence base for the Skills for Londoners (SfL) Strategy found that key groups with protected characteristics (including women; Black, Asian and minority ethnic Londoners; and disabled Londoners) are under-represented in London's labour market. Access to better LMI will help to produce work that would lead to the development of policies and initiatives to address this. Such work includes prioritising inclusive, good-quality education and transition opportunities for all, with targeted actions to improve access for protected and under-represented groups.

4. Other considerations

- 4.1 The procurement of the contract will be managed via TfL. The contract with Lightcast will be held by the reseller.
- 4.2 Entering into a two-year agreement with Lightcast affords the GLA certainty in accessing key LMI. It also provides value for money, as Lightcast offers a more competitive rate for two years of subscription than one year.

Risks and issues

- 4.3 Continued access to online job-postings data will ensure that GLA officers maintain an uninterrupted and up-to-date understanding of trends in London's labour market. By maintaining this subscription, officers can leverage new and updated analyses and outputs. This maximises the value of the data for informed decision-making and effective information-sharing.
- 4.4 Following the end of the SAP funding in 2022-23, it was agreed that the cost of the subscription would be funded equally by the Skills and Employment Unit and the City Intelligence Unit (CIU).

Links to Mayoral Strategies and priorities

- 4.5 The continued access to online job-postings data will help inform and support the development of employment and skills policy and programmes in London. The [SfL Strategy](#) sets out the need to improve London's skills system across several areas – particularly the Adult Education Budget, which

³ Officers evaluated the options based on cost, data quality, functionality and user experience. The recommendation reflects cost considerations, as well as considerations related to the presentation and interpretation of online job-postings data through data portals/applications (e.g., efficient access to robust information and diverse data breakdowns).

has been delegated to the Mayoralty since 2019. It will also help skills providers understand and find timely, granular and local LMI, as highlighted in the [Skills Roadmap for London](#).

- 4.6 There are no conflicts of interest to declare from those involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 Approval is sought for allocating total expenditure of £61,000, plus a 1-3 per cent reseller fee (making a total of £62,830), towards the Lightcast online job-postings data subscription renewal for two years (1 July 2024 to 30 June 2026).
- 5.2 The cost will be shared equally between the CIU and the Skills and Employment Unit (£30,500 each, plus the 1-3 per cent reseller fee, making a total of £31,415 each).

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Executive Director of Strategy and Communications concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further – or that are facilitative of, or conducive or incidental to – the promotion of skills development, job creation and economic development in Greater London.
- 6.2 In implementing the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers should comply with the GLA's related statutory duties to:
- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people
 - consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom
 - consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.3 In taking the decisions requested, the Executive Director of Strategy and Communications must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 – namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment) and persons who do not. To this end, the Executive Director of Strategy and Communications should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.
- 6.4 All procurements of works, services and supplies required must be procured in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code (the Code); and, where the value exceeds £150,000, the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (the Regulations). As set out in section 2, above, officers have liaised with TfL's procurement and supply chain team to determine the detail of the procurement strategy to be adopted in accordance with the Code. Officers must ensure that appropriate contractual documentation is put in place, and executed by the chosen supplier and the GLA, before the commencement of the attendant services.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 7.1 Upon receiving approval, GLA officers will take forward the necessary contractual arrangements to formalise our subscription with the reseller, who will hold the contract with Lightcast.

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	May 2024
Delivery start date	1 July 2024 (existing contract ends 30 June 2024)
Delivery end date	Renewal date on 30 June 2026 (two-year contract)

Appendices and supporting papers:

None

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will be published either within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 – Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Monet Durieux has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Luke Bruce has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

Financial and Legal advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 10 June 2024.

✓

INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:



Date:

10/06/2024