



Public contract - Kofoeds Skole

Kofoeds Skole's activation, rehabilitation and training for the long-term unemployed through public contracts

Summary

Kofoeds Skole (*Kofoeds School*) in Denmark, a non-profit organisation providing help for people with socio-economic problems based on a pedagogical model, maintains a close relationship with the municipality. An activation, rehabilitation and training programme for the long-term unemployed is one of two programmes it runs as a service provider for the municipality of Copenhagen. The School's financial risk arising from revenues received per participant in this scheme has been countered with quality services, ensuring continuously high intakes and funding.

Since its founding in 1928, Danish Kofoeds Skole has received different forms of state subsidies under a range of social welfare acts, some of them being disbursed through the local government. The School has maintained close ties with the latter and today, acts as a provider of social services commissioned by the municipality of Copenhagen. "The relationship with the local authorities is a professional one, without problems, conflicts or opposed interests" which has helped the School to secure funding, confirms Mr. Meldgaard of Kofoeds Skole.

A tender to the municipal government with tailored services

In 2004, the municipality of Copenhagen announced a request for tenders to social service providers for a three-year regular contract over an activation programme with long-term unemployed persons, to be implemented in cooperation with the city's job centre. Because as an organisation specialised in education and training, Kofoeds Skole seemed to have the right qualifications and resources, a working group of representatives from the School's different departments put together a tender for an integrated programme based on its pedagogical model. Matching the very detailed conditions of the municipality regarding flexibility, quality and pricing, the tender included comprehensive service packages tailored to the varying needs of each individual participant, encompassing not only educational and practical job training, but also services related to other dimensions of problems typically faced by long-term unemployed persons, like social, health or mental issues. Kofoeds Skole was one of the institutions that were awarded a contract then and has won in all following requests for tenders.

Mr. Meldgaard believes that the organisation's many years of experience in working with unemployed persons are key for succeeding in the tendering process, as well as the skills and competences of its qualified personnel groups, namely craftspeople, teachers, social workers, psychologists, medical doctors, dentists and lawyers. Another important factor is the competitive price Kofoeds Skole can offer due to its size. As a large organisation with facilities already equipped with the tools, machines and devices necessary for a practical training program, it can provide a wide range of individualized services with a short lead time at a relatively low cost. The current contract covers training and rehabilitation services for up to 270 long-term unemployed persons at a time, with revenues being received as clients enter the programme. For each client, or student, as the School prefers to call its users, an individual training and rehabilitation schedule is agreed between the job centre, Kofoeds Skole and the student.





Depending on capacities and needs, students take up such courses as accounting, languages or other labour market related disciplines and participate in practical skills trainings in one of the School's workshops, learning carpentry, electrical repairs or kitchen and cafeteria services, among many others. Also, they receive vocational counselling, psychological support, health care and legal support if needed. As part of the School's pedagogical model, students contribute to the facilities' maintenance and so take on responsibility for themselves and their surroundings.

Dealing with financial uncertainty

The municipality buys the respective amount of training and education, ranging from five to twenty hours per week per student when the schedule is set up or changed. For the School, this contract modality presents a financial risk: Kofoeds Skole has to be prepared to deliver a full programme for the maximum number of 270 students coming in through this scheme at any time without having the assurance that the services will actually be accessed. When asked about how the School managed to estimate the amount of clients and hours for its planning, Mr. Meldgaard explains that "at the beginning, it was an informed guess. But in the next period, you can base your decision on the experience". He believes it is due to the quality and diversity of Kofoeds Skole's programme that, in contrast to other providers, it has usually been sent the maximum number of clients, with revenues amounting to approximately 1.4 million euros annually and so has not had to fire staff during the course of the programme. A controlling body hired by the municipality visits the School twice a year without prior announcement to check on the quality of the programme delivery.

Although the programme has proven to be positive and received further funding, it can be difficult for the long-term unemployed students to find a job, even after participating in the programme. Due to personal histories of unemployment for often more than ten years and the labour market not favouring the re-entry of this group, they are sometimes sent back for another activation training by the job centre after a certain period: "For some of them, it is like a revolving door". However, the social aspect of the School's program has other positive effects for the clients: once a student on this scheme has completed the obligatory modules considered relevant to the labour market, she or he can take up other courses within their field of interest and skills, like for example playing music, which contributes to overcoming social problems.

The municipal government's funding is thus seen to be crucial and the School's services are an integral part of the Danish social system. Kofoeds Skole of Copenhagen, who has helped to found similar institutions in several other countries, hence stresses the importance of informing the local authorities of the School's pedagogical model as well as that of building up a positive relationship with the municipality early on, to secure funding and operations in the future.

Further information:

Kofoeds Skole: <http://www.kofoedsskole.dk/omos/international/aboutus.aspx>

Kofoeds School International: <http://international.kofoedsskole.dk/>

Publication about Kofoeds Skole:

<http://international.kofoedsskole.dk/media/7727925/kofoeds%20school%20-%20the%20history.pdf>

Contact:

Ole Meldgaard
Chief Consultant
Tel +45 4173 3256
ole@kofoedsskole.dk