

**Farming and Countryside Programme: Tests and Trials**

**Annex C: Evaluation Criteria**

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# **Definitions**

The following definitions will apply to all documentation relating to Test and Trials, Phase 4.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Term | Meaning |
| Authority | Shall mean the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs |
| Call | Shall mean the competition process also referred to as a request for proposal (RFP) or invitation to tender (ITT) |
| Contract | Shall mean the binding terms and conditions which the Authority and the Supplier shall enter into |
| Defra | The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs |
| EOI | Shall mean Expression of Interest, the first stage in the competition process for Test and Trials |
| Full application process | Shall mean stage 2 of the Call. |
| Proposal Development Form | The form to be completed for Stage 2 of the Call, if pass criteria for stage 1 are met |
| Test | Proposals testing the key building blocks and fundamental questions of the future scheme(s) |
| Test and Trial Officer | Defra representative from the Tests and Trials team, who liaise with Suppliers during implementation and delivery of the Test or Trial |
| Test and Trial team | Defra team responsible for design, implementation and delivery of the Test and Trials programme |
| Trial | Proposals researching new ideas and innovative mechanisms and how they could be built into the future scheme(s) |
| Services | Shall mean a Test or a Trial or both |
| Supplier | Shall mean any organisation submitting an EOI or Full application process in order to deliver the Services |

# **Evaluation Criteria**

# **Introduction**

This Evaluation Criteria sets out the evaluation methodology and criteria that will be applied for both stages of the Call. The purpose of this RFP evaluation plan is: -

* To allow the Authority to satisfy itself that each Supplier has responded appropriately to the Call and that it is capable of providing the Services in accordance with the Contract;
* To allow the Authority to make an assessment of each response, in order that an objective comparison is achieved;
* To identify any potential risks or issues which need to be addressed prior to, or post, Contract award.
* To identify the Suppliers who will be awarded Contracts taking into account their ability to meet the policy aims of Test and Trials and that are economically advantageous

# **The Call**

# **The Call**

The Authority confirms that it intends to treat all Suppliers in a fair and equal manner.

Reference should also be made to Call Guidance for details of returning their responses to stages 1 and 2.

Following receipt of responses, the Authority will evaluate those responses against the criteria set out in Section 3.4 of this document. **Compliant responses**

Suppliers are required to provide a compliant response for undertaking the Services. Proposals needing minor alterations to make them compliant and areas of uncertainty requiring clarification will be identified and information will be requested.

# **Financial**

Financial Health Full accounts may be requested as part of the due diligence in stage 2. Suppliers shall provide confirmation that the information provided as part of their stage 2, Full Application responses is up to date and accurate, to ensure financial health checks can be completed.

Pricing At stage 2, Full Application, Suppliers should be willing to make available all pricing information regarding the response in accordance with the terms set out within the Contract.

The pricing must exclude VAT

Pricing may be subject to clarification and adjustment by the Authority during evaluation in relation to matters of inconsistency and uncertainty.

Prices must remain fixed for a period of two hundred and forty days (240) after the Call closing date.

# **Evaluation**

# **The evaluation strategy**

The overall aim of the evaluation process is to select the Supplier responses that will deliver the Test and/or Trials that will best meet our policy aims and the overall objectives as described in Expression of Interest, Annex A: Call Purpose and Scope.

# **The role of evaluation**

The evaluation is a transparent and auditable procedure that is fully documented and is robust, reliable and valid under scrutiny. This will be achieved by:

* Clearing defining and recording the key features of:
  + The process;
  + The procedures;
  + The selection criteria;
  + The basis of scoring.
* Making evaluation principles known to Suppliers in terms of setting out broad principles in the Call;
* Ensuring that judgements are made not by an individual, but by a panel comprising appropriately experienced and competent persons from the Authority and its advisors;
* Keeping a documentary record of all key points in the process

# **Scoring**

# **Overview**

The purpose of the scoring exercise is to evaluate the information presented in each response in a structured and clear manner. Members of the evaluation panels will score each question and each section individually.

An overall total score will be calculated for each Supplier. Those not reaching the minimum criteria score may not be considered in the Stage 2, Full Application Process.

# **Technical scores**

The scoring procedures reflect the quality of each response. Scores will be within the range 1 to 3. Scoring ranges are explained in more detail below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Assessment | Score | Description |
| Excellent | 3 | The response is comprehensive, unambiguous and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the call requirements with detail of how the requirement will be met in full. The EOI clearly communicates: how the proposed Test or Trial aligns with the scope of Tests and Trials; how the proposed Test or Trial addresses the priorities identified in the call; what relevant activities will be conducted to address the priorities identified in the call; and what evidence will be gathered from the relevant activities. |
| Acceptable but minor reservations | 2 | The response addresses some elements of the call requirements but contains insufficient/limited detail or explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be fulfilled. EOI communicates how the proposed Test or Trial aligns with the scope of Tests and Trials and priorities identified by the call but does not provide sufficient information on the relevant activities and/or the evidence which will contribute to addressing the priorities in this call. |
| Poor | 1 | The response fails to demonstrate an ability to meet the call requirements. The EOI does not clearly communicate how the proposed Test or Trial aligns with the scope of Tests and Trial or the priorities identified by this call. |

# **Pricing scores**

Pricing will not be scored at stage 1, EOI however it will be scored in stage 2, Full Application Process.

Pricing will be evaluated to ensure alignment with the reimbursement policy, which has been designed based on market value.

# **Minimum thresholds**

Stage 1: EOI

Each response should meet the score of 3 points in Section 3 (refer to table below) to be recommended to progress to the Full Application Process. The Authority reserves the right at its discretion to reject any response which fails to meet any of the minimum threshold requirements and/or scores 0 in relation to any of the questions.

Stage 2: Full Application Process

There is no minimum threshold for this stage.

# **Evaluation approach**

**Step 1** will consist of certification of the completeness and timeliness of the response. This will include:

* For compliance with the Call and for completeness;
* To identify significant points for clarification. Where incomplete responses have been submitted, the Evaluation Panel will decide whether it is necessary to ask Suppliers to supply the missing material. Suppliers may be disqualified if they are subsequently invited to provide the missing material and fail to do so within a given time period.

**Step 2** will comprise evaluator teams evaluating applications including the quality of the response in regard to the policy aims and objectives of Test and Trials, the commercial arrangements, legal and finance. The Evaluation Panel will use the guidance provided in Section 2.5 and Expression of Interest.

During the evaluation period, the Authority may require the Supplier to provide further information or clarification.

**Step 3** will consist of moderation of scores.

Following the individual assessments, the Evaluation Panel will first review their individual scores, having taken into account any new information gained via the clarifications. Large scoring variations in any question will be reviewed and a final moderated score agreed for each response.

It is envisaged that proposed tests and trials will have a duration of no longer than 12 months. Longer proposals will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Step 4** will consist of due diligence, recommendation and award of contract.

An evaluation report, for Stage 1 EOI and Stage 2 Full Application Process, will be produced by the Evaluation Panel and presented to the Test and Trial teams governance board, which will list its findings including recommendations for the contract awards.

The Authority is committed to providing feedback to Suppliers to encourage continuous improvement in future competitions. The Authority will be as open as possible with Suppliers throughout this competition and will provide feedback to successful and unsuccessful Suppliers, if requested.

The Authority aims to inform Supplies of the success or otherwise of their EOI within 12 weeks from the closing date of the Call, dependent on the volume of submissions received.

# **Expression of Interest evaluation criteria**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Question** | **Min Score** | **Max Score** | **Criteria** |
| 1.1 | Name of lead Supplier / organisation | 0 | 0 | Will not be scored but must be answered |
| 1.2 | Communication address, including postcode and telephone number. If applicable, please also provide registered address, company/charity number and VAT number. | 0 | 0 | Will not be scored but must be answered |
| 1.3 | Main contact name (if different from 1.1)   1. Name 2. Email 3. Telephone | 0 | 0 | Will not be scored but must be answered |
| 2.1 | Are you legally entitled to operate in England? | n/a | n/a | You must be legally entitled to operate in England to be take part in Tests and Trials. Not providing an answer, or answering no will result in the application not being progressed. |
| 2.2. | Are you currently, or have you previously been, in receipt of other Tests and Trials or Defra funding? | 0 | 0 | Will not be scored but must be answered |
| 2.3 | Having reviewed the reimbursement policy set out in Attachment 6, are you confident that the Test/Trial can be completed within these requirements? | 0 | 0 | Will not be scored but must be answered |
| 2.4 | Indicate the principal theme the Test/Trial will contribute to (see Expression of Interest, annex A, Call Purpose and Scope) | 0 | 0 | Will not be scored, but must be answered |
| 2.5 | To your knowledge, are there any additional factors which might impact on your eligibility to participate in Tests and Trials? | 0 | 0 | Will not be scored, but must be answered |
| 3.1 | Please describe in no more than 500 words: the proposed Test or Trial; how it addresses one or more of the policy questions identified by this call (Please refer to Expression of Interest, Annex A, Call Purpose and Scope); the evidence you intend to collect by the end of the Test/Trial; and what relevant activities you will undertake to capture this. | 1 | 3 | Technical scores will be awarded as detailed in Section 2.4.1.2 of this document |
| 3.2 | Outline who will participate in the Test or Trial, including the number of farmers and land managers | 0 | 0 | Will not be scored but must be answered |
| 3.3 | What area (geographic location and scale) will the Test or Trial cover? | 0 | 0 | Will not be scored but must be answered |
| 3.4 | Select the estimated duration of the Test or Trial | 0 | 0 | Will not be scored but must be answered |
| Maximum and minimum scores | Section 1 | 0 | 0 |  |
| Section 2 | 0 | 0 |  |
| Section 3 | 0 | 3 |  |

# **Full Application Proposal scoring criteria**

Suppliers who progress from the EOI to the Full Application Proposal are expected to be awarded a Contract unless they fail due diligence.

Due diligence will provide the Authority with assurance that the proposal is deliverable, specifically it will consider:

* Financial health i.e., that the organisation is financially stable and unlikely to enter into financial difficulties during the Term of the Contract;
* Assurance that the proposal meets the priorities, policy aims and objectives as set out in the Call documentation;
* How likely the Test and/or Trial is to complete during the Term of the Contract;
* The pricing is fair and reasonable including not limited to:
  + Ensuring that the pricing and any pricing assumptions are compliant with Attachment 1, Reimbursement Policy;
  + Ensuring that the pricing is fair when compared to the pricing benchmark collated from Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the Test and Trial programme;
  + That the Supplier does not profit from conducting the Test or Trial.

It is expected that the development of a Full Application Proposal will be completed within four months of being notified of an EOI being successful, dependent on complexity of the proposal. Suppliers should ensure that they have staffing adequate for the proposal development, as well as the delivery of a Test and Trial if a Contract is awarded.

# **4 Timetable**

The timetable below is subject to change from time to time as notified by the Authority via the Authority’s eSourcing System and/or via email from ELMTestingandTrials@defra.gov.uk

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activity Ref | Activity Title | Date (Time) |
| 1 | Requirement published | 20 October 2023 |
| 2 | Deadline for Responses | 30 November 2023 |
| 3 | Evaluation of EOIs | 01 December 2023 to 31 January 2024 |
| 4 | Notification of evaluation | 22 February 2024 |
| 5 | Full Application | February 2024 – June 2024 |
| 6 | Contract award | From 24 June 2024 |
| 7 | Contract start date | From July 2024 |