



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Invitation to Tender

Instructions to Potential Suppliers

Cornwall & The Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership Area

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European Union

European
Social Fund

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1. General Information

- 1.1 Please note that, unless otherwise indicated, references to the "Authority" or to "DWP" throughout these documents mean the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions acting as part of the Crown through his/her representatives in the Department for Work and Pensions. References to "Potential Supplier" mean any person or organisation responding or, where the context requires, potentially responding to this Invitation to Tender (ITT).
- 1.2 These instructions, together with the specification and all other information and documents to which they refer, are designed to ensure that all tenders are given equal and fair consideration. It is important, therefore, that you provide all the information required in the format and order specified.
- 1.3 Please read these instructions carefully, because non-compliance may result in disqualification of your tender. You must ensure you have read the full invitation to tender package including the specification and terms and conditions.

2. Administration of the Procurement Process

- 2.1 The Authority is administering the procurement process electronically via the [DWP eProcurement Solution \(ePS\) Portal](#). No hard copy documents will be issued during the competition and all communications with the Authority (including final submission of tenders) will be conducted via the DWP eProcurement Portal.
- 2.2 To ensure all communications relating to this procurement are received the Potential Supplier must ensure that the point of contact it nominates in the DWP eProcurement Solution portal is up to date. The portal is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year unless notified otherwise by the DWP eProcurement Solution portal.
- 2.3 Support available to help you to understand and use the system includes:
- Freephone helpdesk (0800 368 4850), available Mon-Fri 8am to 6pm (UK time in English language only)
 - Helpdesk via email: help@bravosolution.co.uk
 - Help guides.
- 2.4 Potential Suppliers must ensure that their DWP eProcurement Solution registration directly relates to the part of the supplier organisation that submits the tender (some larger suppliers may have several subsidiaries so registration needs to apply to that part of organisation responsible for this particular requirement).
- 2.5 Where a consortium/Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) is formed to submit a tender, the lead supplier is responsible for coordinating all the required information. See [specific guidance](#) and read the questions carefully.
- 2.6 Should you have any queries with accessing the portal, please contact DWP eProcurement Solution's dedicated supplier helpdesk by calling 0800 368 4850 or by emailing: help@bravosolution.co.uk.

Inputting Information

- 2.7 Use the online 'Help for Suppliers' function. The content is designed to explain the ePS Portal in business terms, allowing you to quickly understand the features and benefits of the software. Help for Suppliers content is presented by software module, and divided into process activities such as PQQs, ITTs and Auctions - just like the software itself.
- 2.8 Save progress regularly. For security reasons access to the portal will 'time out' if inactive (i.e. if you do not click 'save') for ~15 minutes. Failure to save regularly risks losing your work - this is part of strict government requirements to maintain security and tender integrity and cannot be changed. Note that typing does not mean you are active on the portal.
- 2.9 Please ensure that 'pop ups' are not blocked on your browser. Should you be inactive for ~15 minutes, the portal will notify you through a 'pop up'. It is vital that that you are able to see this in order to click the

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'Refresh' link in this 'pop up' so you are not disconnected from the portal and lose any unsaved information.

- 2.10 Do not leave your response until the last minutes/hours before the deadline. If you experience connection problems you may miss the deadline. Late tenders cannot be accepted. Always upload generic information early to avoid last minute time pressure.
- 2.11 Please submit your response when completed. Failure to do this will result in your bid not being visible to the buyer. The 'submit response' button is at the top centre of the screen.
- 2.12 If the Buyer makes any changes to the settings and questions area of a live/running tender, Potential Suppliers must re-publish their response - this is to ensure that changes are brought to your attention - you may receive a message prompt from the Buyer - generally this will not mean re-entering information.
- 2.13 Whilst the portal allows for large individual attachment sizes (max 50mb at a time), we recommend that you keep attachments to a manageable size to ensure ease & speed of access. Only attach documents that the Buyer has requested and make sure that you attach them in the correct area.
- 2.14 If you have any software queries refer to 'Help for Suppliers' in the first instance, if you still have an issue email or telephone the BravoSolution helpdesk with a tender reference, a clear description of the problem and your contact details (ensure that you leave plenty of time for issues to be resolved prior to any deadlines).
- 2.15 Do not use the 'Back' or 'Forward' buttons on your browser, you could potentially lose your work. Please use the links on the eTendering portal to navigate through the tenders.
- 2.16 To understand icons, use your mouse to 'hover' over the icon and view the 'ToolTip'. Please note that text responses are deliberately capped at 2000 characters (~350 words). If the Authority requires a longer response they will add an additional text box or an 'Attachment' question. Also note that Numeric fields will not accept text, spaces, symbols etc. Note the red asterisk indicates a mandatory field - this must be completed in order to submit your response to the buyer.
- 2.17 If you are delegating your response please ensure that your colleagues are aware of this information and are IT literate.
- 2.18 Please treat your eTendering portal logins securely - if you believe that you have lost your password - please log onto the website and click onto "Forgotten your password?" and follow the instructions.

- 2.19 The Qualification Envelope (supplier selection and exclusion questions) holds information provided when the Potential Supplier registered on the DWP eProcurement Solution. The answers provided in that profile will automatically be used to pre-populate some parts of the qualification envelope. Potential Suppliers may update these answers and the new information will be saved against the organisation profile.
- 2.20 Please allow sufficient time to submit the response. We recommend allowing time for a final check to be undertaken prior to the submission deadline. It will not be possible to upload any further information after the submission deadline. IT problems within Potential Suppliers' systems will not be considered reasonable grounds for late submission.
- 2.21 Where a question requires the upload of a document then that document must be completed in the format specified within the question. Files submitted in any other format will not be accepted. All acronyms and abbreviations, if used, must be fully explained.
- 2.22 Within the DWP eProcurement Portal Potential Suppliers are able to submit, modify and resubmit responses at any time prior to the submission deadline. Responses cannot be modified by Potential Suppliers after the submission deadline. Potential Suppliers must ensure they have only submitted a single response through the DWP eProcurement Portal.

3. Tender Submission Process

Background

- 3.1 The DWP eProcurement Portal relies on the completion of 3 envelopes which will contain all of the information the Authority requires to enable full evaluation to take place. All information should be uploaded as per instructions into the relevant envelopes on the DWP eProcurement Portal.
- Qualification Envelope – Is used for gathering information to qualify Potential Suppliers for further evaluation
 - Technical Envelope – Is used for gathering information to allow for full evaluation of the technical side of the proposal
 - Commercial Envelope – Is used to gather the Pricing Proposal

Tender Completion

- 3.2 The information or text contained within the ITT (including its Annexes) and your response, any variation of them and any formal interchange of correspondence or information will be incorporated into any subsequent contract/framework agreement that the Authority may enter into as a result of this ITT.
- 3.3 Responses must not exceed the pre-set margins and space allocation. In some cases the Authority may put a word limit on your response to some or all questions. These limits are provided in the Invitation to Tender

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document and any response in excess of these allocations will be disregarded and will not be taken into account.

- 3.4 Therefore, bullets, tables, graphs and charts in support of your responses are all permitted. Responses must be presented using Arial font size 12 (English Language and black typeface) this includes instances where information may be tabulated as part of the response. The only exception permitted is for illustrative screen shots, graphs and charts, which should be presented within the allocated page limit for the question they are relevant to and must not be embedded separately as this information will be disregarded.
- 3.5 **Please ensure that all answers are self-contained, with no cross-referencing.** Only information entered into the appropriate answer boxes or in additional documents supplied as requested will be taken into consideration for the purposes of evaluating the tender.
- 3.6 Tenders should be completed using standard software e.g. Microsoft Word, Excel or PDF. **Files submitted in Microsoft Project format and PDF will not be accepted.**
- 3.7 All acronyms and abbreviations, if used, must be fully explained.

Procurement Timetable

- 3.8 Set out below is the proposed procurement timetable. This is intended as a **guide** and, whilst the Authority does not intend to depart significantly from it, there may be occasions, especially around obtaining Ministerial Approval, where the timetable will be subject to minor change.

Activity	Date
Publication of the OJEU Contract Notice (Day 1 of 120 day timeline)	29 th January 2016
Publication of the ITT to all Potential Suppliers	29 th January 2016
Q&A - Set up and run an online/electronic Q&A facility	1 st February 2016
Final date for Q&A from Potential Suppliers	4 th March 2016
Deadline for return of tenders	10 a.m. 10 th March 2016
Evaluate tenders	From 14 th March 2016
Procurement and Commercial Board/Independent Approval	w/c 25 th April 2016
Intention to Award notification issued to successful and unsuccessful tenderers	w/c 6 th June 2016
Standstill period and feedback to both successful and unsuccessful tenderer's	w/c 6 th June 2016
Sign contract	w/c 4 th July 2016
Service Start Date	w/c 5 th September 2016

- 3.9 Not used.

- 3.10 Labels are part of DWP eTendering and eEvaluation requirements and must not be altered. In addition, the other tender document file names must not be altered under any circumstances.

Deadline for Submission of Tenders

- 3.11 All tenders must be received by the Authority by the tender submission deadline which is shown in the procurement timetable.
- 3.12 To ensure that all Potential Suppliers are treated fairly tenders received after the tender submission deadline will usually be rejected by the Authority. The decision whether to reject a tender received after the tender submission deadline is made entirely at the Authority's discretion.
- 3.13 A Potential Supplier may withdraw from this procurement by choosing not to submit a tender by the tender submission deadline. It would be useful to the department if you can advise us in advance that you will not be submitting a proposal and if possible the reasons behind your decision.

Additional Materials, Documents and Attachments

- 3.14 No additional documentation should be submitted with a tender unless specifically requested by the Authority
- 3.15 Information that forms part of general company literature or promotional brochures will not form part of the evaluation process and should not be submitted.
- 3.16 The tender should not contain any inserted, pasted or embedded pictures or documents (image files, Adobe Acrobat documents or other Word documents) unless specifically requested by the Authority
- 3.17 Any additional documents requested by the Authority must be clearly referenced within the body of the tender using a unique, un-ambiguous and relevant file name. They must be saved using MS Word (in Web Page, filtered format only), MS Excel, MS Power Point, Adobe Acrobat or jpeg formats. No other file formats should be used.

4. Conditions Applying to this Tender

Open Procedure

- 4.1 The Authority is managing this procurement in accordance with its general obligations under the EU Law and specifically in accordance with the Regulations 74-76 of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (Light Touch Regime). We will use a single stage, quasi-open procedure that is similar to the Open Procedure described in Regulation 27.
- 4.2 It is the Authority's intention that this procurement exercise will comply with the overriding EU Procurement Directive principles for open and transparent competition to ensure value for money.

Authority's Terms and Conditions

- 4.3 Potential Suppliers are not permitted to submit their own terms and conditions. Material amendments to the Authority's terms and conditions will not be considered.

Costs and Expenses

- 4.4 Potential Suppliers are not entitled to claim from the Authority any costs or expenses which may be incurred in preparing and/or submitting a tender.
- 4.5 This applies whether or not the supplier or any other organisation is successful and also applies to any additional cost a Potential Supplier may incur if the Authority modifies or amends its requirements or if the Authority cancels this procurement for whatever reason.

Confidentiality

- 4.6 All information supplied by the Authority to Potential Suppliers must be treated in confidence (unless already in the public domain) and must not be disclosed to third parties other than as is necessary for the purposes of preparing a response and for obtaining sureties or quotations for the purpose of submitting this tender. All information supplied by you to the Authority will similarly be treated in confidence except:
- I. For the disclosure of such information with regard to the outcome of the procurement process as may be required to be published in the Official Journal of the European Union in accordance with EU Directives or elsewhere in accordance with the requirements of UK government policy on the disclosure of information relating to government contracts
 - II. That as part of the debriefing process we will inform any eliminated tenderer, who has made an admissible tender, of the characteristics and relative advantages of the successful tender(s), as well as, where appropriate, the qualitative evaluation score(s) achieved by and name(s) of the successful tenderer(s)
 - III. In pursuance of the Authority's statutory obligations under the [Freedom of Information Act](#) 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulations or the UK Government's requirements on transparency. Even where it is indicated that information supplied is commercially sensitive the Authority may be required to disclose it. Material marked 'confidential' or similar does not mean the Authority accepts any duty of confidence
 - IV. References may be sought from banks, existing or past clients, or other referees submitted by the tenderer. The Authority confirms that it will keep confidential any information obtained from referees other than to Crown Commercial Service and/or contracting authorities defined in the Public Contracts Regulations.

- 4.7 The Authority is subject to general control and reporting within Government and reports to the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury for all expenditure. Cabinet Office has a cross-Government role delivering overall Government policy on public procurement - including ensuring value for money and related aspects of good procurement practice.
- 4.8 For the purposes mentioned above, the Authority may disclose within Government any of the Potential Supplier's documentation/information (including any that the Potential Supplier considers to be confidential and/or commercially sensitive, such as specific bid information) submitted by the Potential Supplier to the Authority during this Procurement. The information will not be disclosed outside Government

Contract Period

- 4.9 The contract will consist of:
- 8-13 week Commencement Period from the Contract Commencement Date;
 - 3 year Provision Period which will include any In-Work Support Provision appropriate to the Participant's needs;
 - 64 weeks payment tail;
 - There will also be a Run Off period under which the Provider will continue to have obligations under the Contract.
- 4.10 Service delivery under this contract is expected to commence in September 2016 and continue until August 2019.

Amendments to the Tender Process or Tender Documents by the Authority

- 4.11 The Authority reserves the right to vary the tender process and/or amend the tender documents (including this ITT Instructions to Potential Suppliers document) at any time prior to the deadline for receipt of tenders. Any such amendment will be numbered, dated and issued by the Authority via the DWP eProcurement Portal. Where amendments are significant, the Authority may at its discretion extend the deadline for receipt of tenders.
- 4.12 The Authority reserves the right to discontinue this tendering process at any time and not to award a contract.

Potential Supplier Clarification (Q&A)

- 4.13 Potential Suppliers have the opportunity to raise questions about the ITT and request clarification about the requirement. All questions raised must be submitted via the [DWP eProcurement Solution Portal](#).
- 4.14 The Q&A log will be published on the DWP eProcurement Portal and will be updated regularly. It will be the responsibility of the Potential Supplier to monitor the portal for the latest activity.

- 4.15 The last date for the submission of questions along with the date of the publication of the final Q&A log on the DWP eProcurement Portal is shown in the [procurement timetable](#).
- 4.16 The final date for questions and answers and dissemination allows sufficient time for Potential Suppliers to impact this information before finalising their tenders for submission.
- 4.17 If a question is deemed by a Potential Supplier to be commercially confidential, then they should indicate that they believe this is the case. The Authority will consider this and if in agreement, will exercise due discretion in handling the question and limiting the circulation of the answer(s) to your organisation.
- 4.18 Questions not deemed to be commercially confidential will be considered by the Authority to be of significance to all Potential Suppliers. All questions and answers will be made anonymous and made available to all Potential Suppliers via the [DWP eProcurement Solution Portal](#). If the Authority intends to follow this course of action it will inform you before sharing the question and response.

Acceptance and Return of Tenders

- 4.19 By issuing the ITT the Authority is not bound in any way and does not have to accept any tender.
- 4.20 The tender, comprising the information set out in the ITT must be completed and submitted in its entirety to the DWP eProcurement Portal by the stipulated deadline.
- 4.21 Tenders will undergo an initial compliance check to ensure that all information requested has been received. Tenders will be rejected if the complete information requested is not included as part of the tender documentation.

Period for which Tenders shall Remain Valid

- 4.22 Tenders shall remain valid and capable of acceptance for 180 days from the date of award of the contract by DWP. Should the delivery of the Contract, including but not limited to the Implementation Plan and the Service, not be in accordance to the Contract, DWP reserves the right to terminate the Contract in accordance with its provisions and award the contract to the next ranking Supplier.
- 4.23 Not used.

Variant Proposals

- 4.24 Variant proposals will not be accepted unless otherwise stated in the Contract Notice.

5. Supplier Selection and Exclusion – The Qualification Envelope

Principles

- 5.1 The supplier selection and exclusion questions assess the suitability of a Potential Supplier to deliver the authority's requirement. If you are successful at this stage of the procurement process, your bid will be evaluated in the subsequent award stage of the process.
- 5.2 Potential Suppliers should note that, in accordance with Regulation 57 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the Authority may take account of information in the public domain in addition to information provided in the bid. The Authority will contact the Potential Supplier to clarify such information.

Verification of Information Provided

- 5.3 The Authority reserves the right to request information at any time throughout the procurement process. This may include confirmation from customers of the accuracy of information provided to demonstrate Technical and Professional Ability. However, the authority will allow Potential Suppliers to self-certify whether there are any mandatory / discretionary grounds for excluding their organisation.

Supplier Information

- 5.4 This section is used to gather the necessary details to understand the nature of the organisation and legal entity participating in the procurement exercise. This section is not scored.

Bidding Model

- 5.5 This section is used to gather information to allow the Authority to understand the nature of the Potential Supplier's proposed supply chain. The Authority requires additional information where the tender relies on a consortium and/or sub-contractors. This section is not scored but the Authority must be satisfied that the proposed bidding model will allow the requirement to be met successfully otherwise the bid will be rejected.

Sub-contractors

- 5.6 Where the Potential Supplier proposes to use one or more sub-contractors to deliver some or all of the contract requirements full details must be provided, including members of the supply chain, the percentage of work being delivered by each sub-contractor and the key contract deliverables each sub-contractor will be responsible for.
- 5.7 The authority recognises that arrangements in relation to sub-contracting may be subject to future change, and may not be finalised until a later date. However, Potential Suppliers should be aware that where information provided to the authority indicates that sub-contractors are to play a significant role in delivering key contract requirements, any changes to those sub-contracting arrangements may affect the ability of the Potential Supplier to meet the requirement. Potential Suppliers should therefore notify the authority immediately of any change in the proposed

sub-contractor arrangements. The authority reserves the right to deselect the Potential Supplier prior to any award of contract, based on an assessment of the updated information.

- 5.8 A Potential Supplier's tender must clearly identify in response to any question, when it is relying on a sub-contractor, the name of the particular sub-contractor and explain the sub-contractor's capability and experience as the context of the question requires.
- 5.9 The Authority does not require all sub-contractors to be disclosed. It only requires a Potential Supplier to disclose those sub-contractors who directly contribute to the Potential Supplier's ability to meet its obligations under the contract. There is no need to specify those sub-contractors providing general services to the Potential Supplier (such as window cleaners, lawyers, desktop software providers etc) that indirectly enable the Potential Supplier to perform the contract. For example if the Authority requires a Potential Supplier to hold a particular licence – then the Potential Supplier may indicate that 'XYZ Co' holds the licence and indicate that services covered by the scope of this licence will only be performed by its sub-contractor 'XYZ Co'.

Consortia arrangements

- 5.10 The consortium lead completes the questions on the eProcurement Portal with regard to their own organisation. They are responsible for coordinating and submitting one Annex D – Consortium Arrangements and (where an SPV is created) one Annex C – Supplier Selection for Consortium Members for each member of the SPV.
- 5.11 Where you are proposing to create a separate legal entity, such as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), you should provide details of the actual or proposed percentage shareholding of the constituent members within the new legal entity in a separate Appendix.
- 5.12 The authority recognises that arrangements in relation to consortia may be subject to future change. Potential Suppliers should therefore respond on the basis of the arrangements as currently envisaged. Potential Suppliers are reminded that the authority must be immediately notified of any changes, or proposed changes, in relation to the bidding model so that a further assessment can be carried out by applying the selection criteria to the new information provided. The authority reserves the right to deselect the Potential Supplier prior to any award of contract, based on an assessment of the updated information.
- 5.13 Not Used

Contact Details

- 5.14 You must provide full details of a contact for the Authority to use in relation to this procurement. The contact should be able to answer questions regarding the bid and act on behalf of the Potential Supplier. This section is not scored.

Licensing and Registration

- 5.15 The Authority requires you to indicate if licensing and registration is required for your business and, if so, whether your organisation holds the required licensing and registration. This section is not scored but the Authority must be satisfied that Potential Supplier has the required licenses and registration to meet the requirement otherwise the bid will be rejected.

Grounds for Mandatory Exclusion

- 5.16 Refer to the additional notes provided on the ePS Portal. This section is used to establish whether there is any reason that the Potential Supplier should not be allowed to continue to participate in the procurement. If you answer 'yes' to one of these questions, indicating that your organisation meets one of the grounds for mandatory exclusion, you will not be allowed to participate further in the procurement unless you can demonstrate adequate ['self-cleaning'](#).

Non-payment of Taxes

- 5.17 Refer to the additional notes provided on the ePS Portal. This is an additional ground for mandatory exclusion. If you answer 'yes' to this question you will not be allowed to participate further in the procurement unless you can demonstrate adequate ['self-cleaning'](#).

Grounds for Discretionary Exclusion – Part 1

- 5.18 Refer to the additional notes provided on the ePS Portal. The Authority can choose to exclude a Potential Supplier who answers 'yes' to one of these questions. You may not be allowed to participate further in the procurement unless you can demonstrate adequate ['self-cleaning'](#).

Conflicts of Interest

- 5.19 Refer to the additional notes provided on the ePS Portal. This is an additional ground for discretionary exclusion. You must identify any potential conflict of interest and provide full details on Annex B including how the conflict of interest might be effectively remedied. If the Authority considers the integrity of the competition is compromised by a conflict of interest you will not be allowed to participate further. The Authority will contact you to discuss further where a potential conflict of interest is identified.

Self-Cleaning

- 5.20 Refer to the additional notes provided on the ePS Portal. This section allows Potential Suppliers to provide further information where they have answered 'yes' to any of the grounds for mandatory rejection, including non-payment of taxes, or grounds for discretionary rejection.
- 5.21 Potential Suppliers should use Annex E to explain in detail how they have addressed issues (identified by a 'yes' answer). The Authority will consider whether the 'self-cleaning' adequately addresses the risk to reliability exposed by the 'yes' answer.

5.22 Not used.

Economic and Financial Standing

5.23 The Potential Supplier should provide the information requested to demonstrate its economic/financial standing. Please see the Financial Evaluation Methodology document.

5.24 Not used.

5.25 The information will be assessed on the basis of a Red/Amber/Green rating. Please see the Financial Evaluation Methodology document.

Technical and Professional Ability - Past Performance

5.26 Refer to the additional notes on the ePS Portal. You must produce Certificates of Performance in the format provided to demonstrate whether relevant principal contracts in the last 3 years have been delivered satisfactorily in accordance with the contract in question.

5.27 The Department for Work and Pensions has developed an approach to ensuring that previous performance by Suppliers can be taken into account and robustly assessed prior to entering into new contracts to deliver national employment programmes. This will give the Department confidence, based on past performance, in the reliability of Suppliers.

5.28 The policy is that, as part of any assessment of a Supplier's technical and professional ability, the Authority should ensure that any failure by the supplier to provide satisfactory performance of previous principal contracts is taken into account in the assessment of whether specified minimum standards for reliability for such contracts are met.

5.29 Evidence will be collected from Suppliers to enable this assessment to be made and a random sample of the evidence collected may be verified, which may include evidence provided by the highest scoring tenderer. If the Certificate of Past Performance shows that performance has not been satisfactory, Potential Suppliers should also provide supplementary information using the template entitled "Additional Information".

5.30 For the purposes of this procurement exercise relevant principal contracts are defined as those concerned with the delivery of similar services and of a similar annual contract value to the specified requirement.

5.31 The Authority requires Potential Suppliers to provide Certificates of Performance for all relevant principal contracts delivered in the last 3 years, including those delivered by all supply chain members that will deliver services under the contract being procured that will have a total value equal to or greater than 20% of the total contract value.

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5.32 Potential Suppliers will be assessed against the following criteria and scoring mechanism:

- The contracts on the list provided by the Supplier have been satisfactorily performed in accordance with their terms or,
- Where that has not occurred, the reason(s) why that has not occurred in relation to any such contract will not reoccur in the performance of the contract to be awarded.

Scoring Mechanism	
Pass	The response meets the stated criteria. There have been no incidences of poor past performance or where there have been, there is a good level of evidence that those failures will not be repeated with either no or minor weaknesses or concerns in the content e.g. there is evidence that concrete steps have been taken and these have already been proven to be effective. Where a new organisation does not have any relevant principal contracts and are unable to rely on the past performance of subcontractors/other consortium members, they should be deemed to have met the stated criteria.
Fail	The response does not meet the stated criteria. There is evidence of poor past performance and the Potential Supplier has either not provided any additional information to demonstrate that the failures will not be repeated or there are major weaknesses or concerns in the content of that information e.g. the information is theoretical or describes actions that have only recently been taken and therefore have not yet been proven to be effective.

5.33 The tenderer waives any contractual right or other confidentiality obligation in connection with the customers mentioned in a list of contracts used to demonstrate evidence of past performance and agrees that these customers may provide information to the Department for Work and Pensions in the form of certificates of performance (in the form set out in Invitation to Tender documentation) and answer any clarifications that the Department for Work and Pensions or anyone acting on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions in connection with this procurement may have. The tenderer confirms that save for any deceitful or maliciously false statements of fact or purported fact included in a certificate or subsequent clarification the customer will not owe the tenderer any duty of care for or otherwise have any legal liability to the tenderer in respect of any factual inaccuracies, whether innocent or negligent, and/or in respect of any expressions of opinion by the customer. This provision is for the benefit of each customer and may be relied on by them for the purposes of the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999.

5.34 The Crown Commercial Service may hold a copy of the certificate of performance on a central database and the content of any certificates of performance from a customer may be shared with Contracting Authorities, acting as part of the Crown.

5.35 If in breach of this provision [5.33] any tenderer commences legal proceedings against a customer in relation to any certificate of performance or subsequent clarification in the courts of any jurisdiction

the relevant entity agrees that the customer shall be entitled to bring proceedings against the tenderer in the English Courts to enforce the terms of this provision (regardless of whether it is enforceable in the jurisdiction where the proceedings are brought) and to be indemnified in full for any legal costs incurred in defending such proceedings and indemnified in respect of any compensation that the customer is ordered to pay to the tenderer as a result of such proceedings. This provision will not relate to any proceedings commenced in good faith for any liability that falls outside the scope of this provision.

Technical and Professional Ability - Previous Experience

- 5.36 Refer to the additional notes provided on the ePS Portal. For each question, you must provide at least 2 contract examples.
- 5.37 In order for technical and professional ability to be assessed the contract examples should be concerned with the delivery of services that are similar to the requirement and be of a similar annual value. The majority of each contract must also have been delivered within the previous 3 years.
- 5.38 Your responses will be assessed against the following criteria and scoring mechanism:

Delivering and Maintaining Performance

Please provide details of how you have successfully delivered and maintained performance in previous contracts.

You should provide at least 2 contract examples that are relevant to the requirement. For the purposes of this question, relevant contracts are defined as those concerned with the delivery of similar services and of a similar annual contract value. For each example, the majority of the contract must have been delivered in the previous 3 years.

Your response should:

- Provide contract and customer details including a brief description of the services delivered and how they are relevant to the requirement
- Provide actual performance data to demonstrate satisfactory cumulative performance against minimum contractual performance and service levels throughout the contract duration
- Provide a clear description of the processes and systems used to monitor performance
- Explain how you achieved and maintained satisfactory performance and continuously improved performance throughout the contract duration while maintaining other existing contractual commitments
- Where applicable, demonstrate how you effectively managed the performance of any subcontractors

Insert your response in the pre-set, shaded space on the following pages. Your response MUST be limited to 2 sides of A4.

Managing and Improving Performance

Please provide details of how you have successfully managed and improved performance in previous contracts.

You should provide at least 2 contract examples that are relevant to the requirement. For the purposes of this question, relevant contracts are defined as those concerned with the delivery of similar services and of a similar annual contract value. For each example, the majority of the contract must have been delivered in the previous 3 years.

Your response should:

- Provide contract and customer details including a brief description of the services delivered and how they are relevant to the requirement
- Provide a clear description of the issues that caused minimum performance and service levels to not be met and how you proactively identified these before customer intervention was required
- Clearly explain how you identified and effectively implemented solutions to fully resolve these issues in a timely manner without adversely impacting on other contracts, including timescales
- With reference to actual performance data, describe the positive impact that this activity had on your performance and how you ensured that the same issues did not reoccur

Insert your response in the pre-set, shaded space on the following pages. Your response MUST be limited to 2 sides of A4.

Sample Scoring Mechanism	
6	The response was robust, detailed, well-articulated in all material respects providing strong evidence that the criteria were met, with no weaknesses or areas of concern with the content.
4	The response presented evidence that the criteria were met, good in many respects, but with minor weaknesses or concerns with the content.
2	The response provided limited evidence that the criteria were met; there were major weaknesses or concerns with the content. The response lacked significant detail and/or clarity.
0	The response did not provide evidence that the criteria were met; and was wholly unsatisfactory in terms of content. Major weaknesses, issues or omissions were identified. The response was poorly articulated and/or inconsistent.

5.39 Any supplier that scores 2 or below in any of these questions will be deemed to have failed to meet the minimum standard and will be eliminated from the procurement exercise.

5.40 Not Used

5.41 Not Used

5.42 Not Used

Insurance

5.43 This section allows you to self-certify that you have or will have adequate insurance as required by the Authority for the delivery of the contract. You will not be allowed to participate further in the procurement unless you can meet the insurance requirements.

Compliance with Equality Legislation

5.44 This section covers the Potential Supplier's history of compliance with equality legislation. The Authority can choose to exclude a Potential Supplier who has been found to have acted in a discriminatory way in the past 3 years. The Potential Supplier has the opportunity to provide details of mitigating factors. The Authority will consider whether the mitigation adequately addresses the risk exposed by the 'yes' answer.

Environmental Management

5.45 This section covers the Potential Supplier's history of compliance with environmental legislation. The Authority can choose to exclude a Potential Supplier who has been found to have breached environmental legislation in the past 3 years. The Potential Supplier has the opportunity to provide details of mitigating factors. The Authority will consider whether the mitigation adequately addresses the risk exposed by the 'yes' answer.

Health and Safety

5.46 This section allows the Potential Suppliers to self-certify that they have an adequate health and safety policy. UK employers with less than five employees are not required by law to have a health and safety policy and will not be excluded for this reason.

5.47 Where the Potential Supplier has been received enforcement/remedial orders from a health and safety body/authority in the past 3 years, allows them to provide details of remedial action.

5.48 The Authority can choose to exclude a Potential Supplier who has received an enforcement/remedial order in relation to health and safety in the past 3 years. The Potential Supplier has the opportunity to provide details of mitigating factors. The Authority will consider whether the mitigation adequately addresses the risk exposed by the 'yes' answer.

Confirmation and Declaration

5.49 The final section of Supplier Selection and Exclusion – the Qualification Envelope, is a declaration against the information provided. This must be completed by a person with authority to act on behalf of the Potential Supplier. This section also serves as a checkpoint for Potential Suppliers

to confirm that they have provided all the information, including additional Annexes, required so far.

6. Tender Evaluation – The Technical Envelope

Principles

- 6.1 The tender evaluation questions assess the Potential Supplier's proposal to deliver the authority's requirement. This information enables the Authority to carry out a qualitative evaluation of the tender.
- 6.2 The information provided in the tender proposal will be evaluated against the pre-determined Award Criteria as stated in the Invitation to Tender.
- 6.3 The DWP ePS Portal asks Potential Suppliers to submit responses which directly correspond with the Award Criteria. The overarching Award Criteria will be made up of sub-criteria by which the Award Criteria will be evaluated.

Qualitative Scoring Methodology

- 6.4 The responses to the ITT will then be scored against the [criteria and weightings](#) using scoring scale set out here. Please note that a score of 0 for a response to any qualitative question, may result in disqualification from the procurement exercise.

Score	Definition
6	The response was robust, detailed, well-articulated in all material respects providing strong evidence that the criteria would be met, with no weaknesses or areas of concern with the content.
4	The response presented evidence that the criteria would be met, good in many respects, but with minor weaknesses or concerns with the content.
2	The response provided limited evidence that the criteria would be met; there were major weaknesses or concerns with the content. The response lacked significant detail and/or clarity.
0	The response did not provide evidence that the criteria would be met; and was wholly unsatisfactory in terms of content. Major weaknesses, issues or omissions were identified. The response was poorly articulated and/or inconsistent.

Draft Security Plan

- 6.5 Cabinet Office has introduced mandatory requirements relating to data handling, security and information assurance in government contracts. Information must be protected, together with systems, equipment and processes which support its use. Our contractors must provide an appropriate level of security.
- 6.6 Potential Suppliers (whether for a contract or place on a framework) are required to submit a Draft Security Plan detailing how you will comply with the DWP Security Policy for Contractors, which includes compliance with ISO/IEC27001 and Cyber Essentials Scheme. A copy of this

document can be found on '[Gov UK - Other DWP procurement and policy documents](#)' and full guidance is provided in the relevant document and in Schedule 6 of the DWP Standard Terms and Conditions. A full Security Plan will be due 20 days after contract award.

6.7 Not used.

Off-shoring (including Landed Resources)

6.8 In accordance with the DWP Offshoring Policy, prior written consent from DWP must be sought where Potential Suppliers (and/or their sub-contractors) are proposing to host or access Departmental systems, services or official information outside of the United Kingdom, or to bring foreign nationals to the United Kingdom to provide services in delivery of the Contract.

6.9 Potential Suppliers must be aware of this and must submit an application for approval together with their tender. Where DWP gives consent, the Potential Supplier shall comply with any reasonable instructions notified to it by DWP in relation to the Authority Data in question. More information can be found in the document A Guide to DWP Offshoring Policy which can be found on '[Gov UK - Other DWP procurement and policy documents](#)'.

Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE)

6.10 Your attention is drawn to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE). It is the Authority's view that TUPE is unlikely to be applicable if this ITT results in a Contract being placed. Nevertheless, it is your responsibility to consider whether or not TUPE applies in the individual circumstances of your tender, particularly if you are proposing to submit an innovative tender.

Qualitative Questions for Service Delivery

6.11 Not used.

6.12 Not used.

Criteria	Weighting	Max. Score
Marketing and Referrals Please describe how you will ensure the desired number of participants attend this provision. Your response should: - Identify the organisations that you will engage with to generate referrals, this should include a broad range of organisations from a variety of sectors - Detail any existing links with these	X2	12

organisations and how these will support referrals or if not yet in place, your strategy for establishing these • Demonstrate how you will achieve maximum occupancy on the provision • Explain how you will attract participants from all the specified priority groups • Detail your marketing strategy for promoting this provision including the different channels that you will use and why you consider this to be suitable for the specified priority groups Insert your response in the pre-set, shaded space on the following pages. Your response MUST be limited to 2 sides of A4.		
Participant Journey & Provision Content Please provide a detailed description of the design and content of the provision, including how this meets the requirements listed in section 3 of the specification. Your response should: • Provide an outline participant journey to illustrate how you will provide a structured intervention for each individual participant, including those who require a higher degree of support and the intended frequency of these interventions • Explain how you will ensure that each individual participant will receive regular reviews to ensure that they progress while participating in the provision and achieve a Job Outcome • Provide a detailed description of the design and content of the provision, including the duration of each element for individual participants and the method of delivery e.g. face to face, telephone, web based, individual, group work etc.	X6	36

• Provide a rationale to clearly demonstrate why the provision content is suitable for the specified priority groups • Explain how you will identify individual participants' barriers to entering work (including but not limited to child care and travel) and tailor the provision to overcome these • Explain what in-work support you will provide to both the participant and where appropriate the employer and how you will ensure that it meets their needs to support the achievement of job outcomes Insert your response in the pre-set, shaded space on the following pages. Your response MUST be limited to 5 sides of A4. <u>PLEASE NOTE THE SCORE ATTAINED IN THIS SECTION MAY ALSO BE USED IN A TIE-BREAK SITUATION WHERE APPROPRIATE.</u>		
Community Engagement Please describe the community engagement that you have undertaken to inform the design of this provision. Your response should: • Identify the characteristics of the local community, any other local factors and the impact of these on the local labour market • Provide evidence of proactive engagement across a range of organisations, detailing the specific stakeholders that you have consulted to gain an understanding of the local community • Explain how you have used the above links to inform the design and content of the provision and ensure that it aligns to local needs and adds value compared to any existing provision that is already available in	X5	30

the area Insert your response in the pre-set, shaded space on the following pages. Your response MUST be limited to 2 sides of A4. <u>PLEASE NOTE THE SCORE ATTAINED IN THIS SECTION MAY ALSO BE USED IN A TIE-BREAK SITUATION WHERE APPROPRIATE.</u>		
Employer Engagement Please describe how you will engage with employers in the local area to achieve job outcomes. Your response should: • Identify the main employment opportunities in the specified geographical area over the life of the contract • Show an understanding of the sectors in the area and those that are experiencing (or are expected to experience) significant growth over the life of the contract • Explain what practical steps you will undertake to capitalise on these opportunities to achieve job outcomes for provision participants • Show how you will identify newly arising opportunities and utilise these to support your above methodology Insert your response in the pre-set, shaded space on the following pages. Your response MUST be limited to 1 sides of A4.	X3	18
Human Resources, Recruitment & Training Detail the human resources (including any sub-contractor staff) that you will use to deliver <u>and</u> manage this provision. Your response should include: • A clear explanation of the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) number of staff, job title, key responsibilities, relevant skills,	X1	6

experience & qualifications for each role. • Where applicable, an average caseload should be provided with a rationale for why this is considered appropriate • Details of the number of existing staff and those who will need to be recruited • A clear description of how you will recruit, train and retain staff to ensure effective delivery of this provision and satisfactory performance from the start of the contract and throughout its lifetime • A clear explanation of how you will manage sickness absences and annual leave during peak times, including contingency arrangements for managing the absence of key staff while maintaining the quality of service delivery and performance levels • A rationale for why you consider your proposed staffing level to be appropriate for this provision and how you will manage this as volumes increase and decrease over the life of the contract Insert your response in the pre-set, shaded space on the following pages. Your response MUST be limited to 2 sides of A4.		
Premises Please provide details of the premises that you will use to deliver this provision, including details of any outreach services. Your response should: • Provide full address details, including post code • Where applicable, describe any outreach services that you will provide • Detail the facilities available at each location and how these support delivery of the	X1	6

provision and meet any legal requirements, including compliance with the Equality Act 2010 • Explain why these premises are considered suitable for the provision and priority groups specified, including proximity to public transport links • Clearly describe how your proposal will achieve full coverage across the contract area • If you intend to use existing premises, explain how delivery of this provision will fit with current use • If you intend to secure new premises, indicate the timescales for doing so ahead of go-live and your contingency arrangements for ensuring timely delivery of this provision • Detail your contingency plans for dealing with fluctuating participant volumes over the life of the contract, including the minimum and maximum volumes that can be handled at any one time without having an adverse impact on your premises proposal Insert your response in the pre-set, shaded space on the following pages. Your response MUST be limited to 2 sides of A4.		
Management Structure Please provide details of your management structure, systems and processes. Your response should: • Include an organisation chart to describe your proposed management structure for this provision • Provide a clear explanation of your capacity to manage this provision alongside existing	X1	6

and any potential future commitments Clearly describe the systems and processes that will be used to provide a robust audit trail of evidence to support payment validation, prevent fraud and meet ESF requirements. This should include but not be limited to: attendance records/action plans, participant consent, evidence to support claims for outcome payments and evidence to prove participants' eligibility. Insert your response in the pre-set, shaded space on the following pages. Your response MUST be limited to 2 sides of A4.		
Supply Chain Please describe your supply chain structure and how you will manage it throughout the life of the contract. Your response should include: - A clear description of your supply chain structure including any subcontractors and partners - A table to show the percentage of service delivery undertaken by any subcontractors, their geographical coverage and specialism - A clear explanation of your contract management practices with members of your supply chain, including how these abide by the principles of the Merlin Standard - A description of how you will communicate throughout your supply chain to share good practice - Details of your contingency arrangements should any member of your supply chain withdraw prior to commencement of service delivery or at any point during the contract period	X4	24

Completed Subcontractor Declaration from all subcontractors listed in your response to this question Insert your response in the pre-set, shaded space on the following pages. Your response MUST be limited to 3 sides of A4. <u>PLEASE NOTE THE SCORE ATTAINED IN THIS SECTION MAY ALSO BE USED IN A TIE-BREAK SITUATION WHERE APPROPRIATE.</u>		
Performance Management Please detail how you will manage the performance of this provision in line with your offer and Section 5 of the Specification. Your response should: - Clearly explain how you will accurately track participants within each cohort so that you can clearly articulate at any given time where these participants are in your participant journey towards achievement of short and sustained job outcomes - Describe how you will proactively manage the achievement of performance levels including the frequency and level of detail of monitoring activity and trend analysis - Identify how you will act on any findings including how you will develop and implement effective solutions to correct failures to meet performance levels in a timely manner and ensure that it does not re-occur - Clearly describe how you will manage the performance of any subcontractors - Explain how you will proactively engage with DWP to notify us of any issues and remedial actions rather than waiting for scheduled review meetings	X3	18

Insert your response in the pre-set, shaded space on the following pages. Your response MUST be limited to 2 sides of A4.		
Quality Please provide a detailed description of how you will ensure the quality of service delivery through your management practices. Your response should: • Provide a detailed explanation of how you will monitor and manage the quality of provision to ensure that the standards set within the specification and your tender will be met from the start and throughout the life of the contract. Your response should include but not be limited to: the quality of staff, frequency and appropriateness of participant engagement and the quality of the action plan and the relevance of its content to participants' needs • Clearly describe how you will manage and ensure the quality of delivery by any subcontractors e.g. site visits, audits and observing delivery • Identify how you will continuously improve the quality of delivery of this provision and share best practice throughout your supply chain • Explain how you will obtain feedback from participants and proactively act upon this including details of procedures and timings • Describe how you will handle complaints and act on any findings including details of procedures, timescales, escalation routes, how participants will be made aware of these procedures and how you will ensure the impartiality of any decision makers Insert your response in the pre-set, shaded space on the following pages. Your response MUST be limited to 3 sides of A4.	X5	30

<u>PLEASE NOTE THE SCORE ATTAINED IN THIS SECTION MAY ALSO BE USED IN A TIE-BREAK SITUATION WHERE APPROPRIATE.</u>		
Performance Offer Rationale With reference to the performance offer that you have provided at Annex S (Pricing Proposal), please explain the rationale for this offer. Your response should: • Identify any assumptions used to develop your offer • Detail any research and/or evidence used to underpin your offer • Clearly explain of how you will support and achieve the rate of Job Outcomes and Sustained Job Outcomes offered within each cohort Insert your response in the pre-set, shaded space on the following pages. Your response MUST be limited to 1 sides of A4.	X1	6
Implementation Plan Please provide an implementation plan in the form of a Gantt Chart to be attached at Annex Z and supporting narrative that shows how you will ensure that service delivery commences between 8 and 13 weeks after the contract commencement date and meets the required standards from the start. Your response should include: • The date on which you propose to commence service delivery • Key milestones, including start and end dates and a named lead for each activity • The timeline for staff recruitment and training • The timeline and key activities to secure and set-up your proposed delivery locations • The critical path and interdependencies	X1	6

• A narrative to expand on the Implementation Plan which identifies all key risks, provides a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating for each of these and explains how they will be mitigated and managed Please note that a page limit does not apply to the implementation plan to be provided at Annex Z. Insert your supporting narrative in the pre-set, shaded space on the following pages. Your response MUST be limited to 2 sides of A4.		
	TOTAL	198

Freedom of Information Act

- 6.13 The Authority is committed to open government and to meeting its legal responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. All information submitted to the Authority may need to be disclosed by the Authority in response to a request under the Act. If you consider that any of the information included in your tender is commercially sensitive, please identify it and explain (in broad terms) what harm may result from disclosure if a request is received, and the time period applicable to that sensitivity.
- 6.14 You should be aware that even where you have indicated that information is commercially sensitive, the Authority may be required to disclose it under the terms of the Act if a request is received. Please note that the receipt of material marked 'confidential' or equivalent by the Authority should not be taken to mean that the Authority accepts any duty of confidence by virtue of that marking. If a request is received, the Authority may also be required to disclose details to unsuccessful tenderers.
- 6.15 Not used

Confirmation and Declaration

- 6.16 The final section of Tender Evaluation – The Technical Envelope, is a declaration against the information provided. This must be completed by a person with authority to act on behalf of the Potential Supplier. This section also serves as a checkpoint for Potential Suppliers to confirm that they have provided all the information, including additional Annexes, required so far.

7. Pricing Proposal – The Commercial Envelope

- 7.1 This envelope is where the Pricing Proposal should be uploaded. This information should be uploaded as follows.

- 7.2 Potential Suppliers will be required to complete a Pricing Proposal (Annex S) for the delivery of the ESF programme. Annex S will show the total contract price from for the life of the contract and this will be separated into: a Delivery Fee; a Short Job Outcome payment; and a Sustained Outcome payment. All bids must be equal to or less than the maximum contract. If the bid's total contract value is higher than this amount the Authority will consider the bid to be non-compliant and it will be excluded from the evaluation. Please see the Financial Evaluation Methodology document.

Price Evaluation Methodology

- 7.3 A financial evaluation will be performed on all submitted tenders. The financial evaluation will comprise of 20 per cent of the overall evaluation score for each bid, with the remaining 80 per cent derived from the quality evaluation scoring process. Please see the Financial Evaluation Methodology document.

Qualitative Evaluation Methodology

- 7.4 Qualitative scoring represents **80%** of the overall evaluation and will be relatively assessed. As an example, this means that the highest scoring bid in the qualitative evaluation for this contract will be awarded the full **80** marks and the other bids will be marked as a proportional variance from the top scoring bid (see example below). The final quality scores will not be rounded at this stage of the process.

Supplier	Total Quality Score (out of 198)	Calculation	Score (out of 80)
A	198	Highest score	80.00
B	180	$180/198 \times 80$	72.73
C	178	$178/198 \times 80$	71.92
D	176	$176/198 \times 80$	71.11
E	174	$174/198 \times 80$	70.30
F	172	$172/198 \times 80$	69.49
G	170	$170/198 \times 80$	68.69
H	160	$160/198 \times 80$	64.65
I	150	$150/198 \times 80$	60.61

8. Baseline Security Standard

- 8.1 Where contractors staff are to be given access to Authority's assets (defined as premises, systems, information or data) the attention of Potential Suppliers is drawn to their contractual obligation. Full details of the actions required to comply with the above procedures, can be found in the guidance document 'HMG Baseline Personnel Security Standard – A Guide for DWP Contractors'. A PDF version of this document can be viewed on gov.uk.
- 8.2 Contractors' staff working in Northern Ireland will be required to be cleared via the Access NI procedures, more information can be obtained

at www.dojni.gov.uk/accessni. A copy of this document in Microsoft Word format can be provided on request. Please note that Potential Suppliers are expected to meet any costs this may involve.

9. Merlin Standard

Potential Suppliers need to be aware that they must attain the Merlin Standard, if not already held, where they have a supply chain within their delivery model for this contract. Potential Suppliers will be assessed against the Merlin Standard by a third party organisation within a year of the contract go live and they must achieve accreditation within 1 year and every two years thereafter.

For further information on the Merlin Standard, please see:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-merlin-standard-guide-for-dwp-providers>
- <http://www.merlinstandard.co.uk/about-merlin.php>

10. Tender Clarification

- 10.1 DWP may need to clarify details of your tender and in those instances DWP will send any questions using the DWP eProcurement Portal to the named person (by email) that is registered on the system, who should arrange for a reply to be provided by the stipulated deadline.
- 10.2 DWP may seek independent financial and market advice to validate information declared, or to assist in the evaluation.

11. Potential Supplier Presentations

Not applicable.

12. eAuction Process

Not applicable.

13. Contract Award

Parent Company Guarantee (PCG)

- 13.1 If your company has a parent company and should you be deemed successful in tendering for this contract, then DWP will require a signed Parent Company Guarantee (PCG) to be in place prior to any contract(s) being signed.
- 13.2 The PCG is not negotiable however there may be exceptional circumstances where the wording needs to be amended or an equivalent deed of guarantee supplied. These may include Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs), consortia and organisations that have parent companies based abroad.
- 13.3 If the parent company is a charity, the Authority would need to understand whether there is anything in the provisions of the charity's

constitution that prevents them from being able to offer a PCG. In these circumstances the Authority may require an alternative guarantor.

Ranking Tenders – Recommendation for Contract Award

- 13.4 The tender process has been designed to ensure that tenders are evaluated fairly to ascertain the most economically advantageous tender and once the qualitative and financial aspects have been evaluated the Authority will produce a ranked merit list based on this tender process.
- 13.5 The Potential Supplier(s), who obtains the highest overall score from the evaluation process, taking into account the Award Criteria weightings, will be recommended for contract award.
- 13.6 Before any contract can be entered into the Authority is mandated to seek and obtain Independent Approval, Ministerial Approval and possibly Crown Representative Approval.

14. Independent Approval

- 14.1 The results of the Qualitative and Price Evaluation Process (resultant rankings along with the marks awarded) will be independently checked and verified by individual(s) not previously involved in the procurement process.
- 14.2 Subject to this Independent Approval the Department will then seek Ministerial Approval before an award of contract can be made.

15. Ministerial Approval

- 15.1 The final decision to award will be subject to Ministerial Approval. No communication of any details regardless of whether a tenderer has been successful or otherwise will be issued until this approval has been granted and authorised by the Minister concerned. Once this approval has been communicated to the procurement team they will have responsibility for the issue of the appropriate successful/unsuccessful letters to all those suppliers that submitted a response to the ITT.

16. Crown Representative Approval

- 16.1 Not applicable to this procurement.
- 16.2 CR approval must be sought when after final evaluation the preferred supplier is identified as being a key supplier. No action (i.e. no communication on award, including advising preferred supplier status) should be taken without involving the CR in the evaluation process, and obtaining CR agreement in awarding the contract.

17. Standstill Period

- 17.1 We will voluntarily apply a Standstill Period. The standstill period is a 10 day pause between contract award decision and the formal award of the contract. The period allows unsuccessful tenderers to obtain more information on the award of the contract.

18. Publication of Contract Award on Contracts Finder

- 18.1 Irrespective of whether or not publication of a Contract Award Notice in OJEU is required, details of all contracts awarded with a value greater than £10,000 will be published on the Contracts Finder website. Details will be published after 20 days following the end of the standstill period.

19. Post Contract Award

Contract Documentation

- 19.1 The Authority will be responsible for producing a final contract document and issuing to the successful supplier.

Sustainable Development

- 19.2 In accordance with the Sustainable Development Contract Schedule the successful supplier is required to complete and provide a policy statement (within 6 months of contract (or call-off) start date and annually thereafter) to demonstrate how they will satisfy and adhere to the principles of sustainable development. Also at the 6-month stage the successful supplier will need to produce an Sustainable Development Action Plan detailing (but not limited to) how they will tackle key issues such as waste minimisation, water consumption reduction and carbon emissions within their business and in relation to this contract.

Diversity and Equality

- 19.3 In accordance with the Diversity and Equality Contract Schedule the successful supplier is required to complete and provide a Diversity and Equality Delivery Plan (within 6 months of contract start date and annually thereafter) detailing their approach to Diversity and Equality within their business and in relation to this contract.

Apprenticeships and Skills

- 19.4 In accordance with the Apprenticeships and Skills Contract Schedule and in line with the Governments objective to support economic growth the successful supplier is required to submit an apprenticeships and skills report (within 6 months of contract start date) which should be specific to this contract.

20. Use of SMEs in the Contractor's Supply Chain

- 20.1 The Authority recognises the important role small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have in helping to deliver economic growth and prosperity. SMEs are defined as enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding 50 million euro, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding 43 million euro. The Authority is committed to supporting the governments target of 33% of government spending with third party suppliers to go to SMEs through either direct spend or indirectly through the supply chain where it is relevant to the contractual requirement to do so and provides value for money.

- 20.2 In support of the government's commitment on SMEs, the Authority is putting in place processes to promote greater engagement with SMEs. The Authority encourages its suppliers to make their sub-contracting opportunities accessible to smaller companies and implement SME-friendly policies in their supply-chains.
- 20.3 The Contractor is encouraged to:
- Open opportunities for SMEs in supply chains by splitting requirements into smaller elements to make them more attractive to the SME market whilst bringing innovation, flexibility and value for money
 - Advertise any sub-contracting opportunities where appropriate and economical to do so, for example by using Contracts Finder or informing local networks/partners
 - Where possible pay SMEs earlier than the contractual requirement of 30 days from receipt of valid invoice
 - Work with SMEs throughout the life of the contract to develop innovative and cost effective solutions delivered through the supply chain.
- 20.4 Regular contract review meetings should be used to enable both parties to explore continued and increased use of SMEs where appropriate throughout the life of the contract. Additional information may be requested by the Authority on the volume of business undertaken throughout the supply chain with SMEs.

Expenditure with SMEs

- 20.5 The Authority is required to provide regular reports on the level of procurement spend with SMEs to the Cabinet Office. To measure and accurately report on this, the Contractor and where applicable, its sub-contractors shall identify the volume of indirect expenditure the Authority undertakes with SMEs and shall provide this information on a quarterly basis to the Authority or Cabinet Office.

21. DWP Complaints Procedure

- 21.1 The Authority has published a [Commercial Complaints Process](#) for use during competitive procurement.