

**Outsourced Finance Support Service**

**PART A: Invitation to Tender (ITT) – Information Document**

**April 2019**

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#

## Introduction

* + 1. This Invitation to Tender (ITT) is issued by the Single Source Regulations Office (SSRO) (the **“Authority**”) for the appointment of a Contractor to provide Outsourced Finance Support Services to the Authority.
		2. The content of this ITT is for use by prospective Bidders who wish to submit a Tender Response in relation to the delivery of the Services, more particularly set out in the Specification.
		3. This ITT is provided on the basis that it is and shall remain the property of the Authority and must be treated as confidential.
		4. Any terms used in this ITT shall have the meaning given to them in **Annex 1** (interpretation of terms) below.
		5. This document contains the information and instructions that you will need in order to submit a compliant Tender Response. The Authority will evaluate compliant Tenders Responses against the evaluation criteria, in accordance with the methodology set out in this ITT.

**Structure of the ITT**

* + 1. This **ITT consists** of 4 Parts:
			1. **Part A**: **Information Document** - this explanatory document provides an overview of the Authority, the Outsourced finance support services and sets out the procurement process and timetable;
			2. **Part B**: **Evaluation Framework** – this explanatory document provides and details the criteria, weightings and scoring methodology that will be applied by the Authority when evaluating Tender Responses;
			3. **Part C**: **Contract Terms** – this contains the terms on which the Authority will execute the contract for Finance Support Services at the end of this procurement process and the Specification, which iscontained in **Schedule 4 of Part C**; and
			4. **Part D**: **Pricing** – this is an MS Excel format workbook that Bidders are required to complete as part of their Tender Response, and which will be evaluated in accordance with Part B: Evaluation Framework.

## The Authority

* + 1. The Single Source Procurement Regime came into force in December 2014, following Parliamentary approval of the regulations relating to the Defence Reform Act 2014.
		2. The SSRO regulates the UK government’s procurement of ‘single source’, or non-competitive, defence goods, works and services. It is the independent statutory regulator of single source defence procurement, issuing statutory guidance, assessing compliance and determining how the regime applies to individual contracts.
		3. The SSRO’s principal statutory aims are to ensure that good value for money is obtained for the UK taxpayer in expenditure on qualifying defence contracts, and that single source suppliers are paid a fair and reasonable price under those contracts.
		4. Additional general information about the SSRO can be found on the website: <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/single-source-regulations-office>

## Overview of the Service

* + 1. The Authority requires the provision of Outsourced finance support services, which includes software system(s) and technology to enable appropriate and secure web-based system access that aligns with the Authority’s ICT systems and controls protocols.
		2. The Authority is seeking to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced Contractor to deliver, run and manage its Outsourced finance support services, as set out in the Specification at Schedule 4 to the Contract (“**the Service**”).
		3. The average number of invoices (including employee travel and subsistence claims) is currently circa 2,000 per year. The SSRO currently has circa 50 members of staff on its payroll. Although it is possible that these numbers will increase over the period of the contract, any increase is not likely to exceed 100.
		4. Bidders should note that the contract duration is **3 years (plus an implementation period of 3 months).**
		5. The Authority has set an affordability threshold of a **maximum of £155,000.00** excluding VAT, for the contract duration (including implementation).
		6. Any Tender Response which contains a total price/whole life cost in excess of this affordability threshold will be rejected.
		7. The services which the Contractor is required to provide are summarised in the table below.

| **Service Summary** |
| --- |
| **Financial Accounting Services**: maintain the integrity of the financial database and chart of accounts by undertaking periodic housekeeping and reconciliation routines on the General Ledger. |
| **Management Accounting Service**: maintain the integrity of the structures (e.g. chart of accounts, activity centre structure, journal definitions) within the financial database. |
| **Resource accounts**: ensure this element of the Annual Report and Accounts provides a true and fair view of the Authority's financial position at the time of the preparation of the accounts. |
| **Payments to suppliers and employees**: provision of a payments service via a secure environment within the parameters of available systems controls, for the upload of purchase ledger transactions, through to the production and dispatch of the required payment instrument, (including BACS and CHAPS).  |

**Table 1: Summary of the Outsourced Finance Support Services**

* + 1. The Contractor will be required to provide Financial Accounting, Management Accounting, Resource Accounting and Payments to suppliers and employers services.
		2. The operational timeliness of service delivery is key, as the Authority expects to deliver its finance functions to exacting timescales.
		3. The Contractor will be required to manage the effective migration of all current year and historical data (6 financial year’s data, plus the current year) from the Authority’s existing contractor. This must be supported by a robust audit trail that will be subject to the Authority and audit review and approval.

**Relationship Matters**

* + 1. The Authority considers the relationship between the Contractor and the Authority to be critical to the delivery of services which economically, effectively and efficiently support delivery of the Authority’s functions.
		2. Bidders are referred to **Clause 4 of Part C**: Contract Terms.

## INSTRUCTIONS TO BIDDERS

## 4.1 The Authority anticipates that the tender process will be run in accordance with the timetable set out in Table 2 of this ITT Part A. Whilst the Authority intends to adhere to the timetable where possible, it is indicative only and the Authority expressly reserves the right to amend the timetable at any time at its discretion.

## 4.2 Bidders must read this ITT carefully and ensure that they are familiar with the nature and extent of the obligations in participating in this procurement process. The Authority reserves its right to revise the procurement documentation and, in so doing, will re-issue such documentation via Contracts Finder where appropriate.

4.3 Tender Responses must be submitted strictly in accordance with the instructions contained within this ITT. Failure to comply with the instructions or return a compliant Tender Response may invalidate a Tender Response. It is important, therefore, that Bidders provide all the information required by, and in the format specified in, this ITT document.

### Bidder Response to Tender Questions and Pricing

4.4 Bidders must complete and submit the Response to Tender Questions, which is provided in **Part B: Evaluation Framework to this ITT**. References are made to the Specification contained at Schedule 4 of Part C: Contract Terms.

4.5 **Part D: Pricing**, contains the relevant information on how bidders should structure the pricing element of their Tender Response.

**Submissions, Evaluations and Moderations**

* + 1. Bidders must submit their Tender Response by 5pm on 15 May 2019.
		2. Following submission, the Tender Responses will be evaluated in accordance with the methodology and against the criteria set out in Part B: Evaluation Framework.
		3. The successful bidder will demonstrate a full understanding of the requirements and will have the ability and commitment to provide a comprehensive outsourced service to the SSRO.
		4. Following submission of the Tender Response, Bidders will be required to attend a Systems demonstration meeting, in support of their proposed offer – the meeting affords bidders an opportunity to showcase their proposed system platform. These meetings will NOT form part of the evaluation process and will not be scored.
		5. The System demonstration meeting will be held on 21 May 2019. Each meeting will be held in London, with individual dates, times and location(s) to be confirmed by written notice to Bidders who have submitted a compliant Tender Response.
		6. Bidders may bring a maximum of 5 attendees to the demonstration meeting. Bidders should ensure that attendees have sufficient knowledge (including of the Specification and Tender Response) and expertise in the area of the Services.
		7. The Authority will issue to Bidders the relevant agenda items for the demonstration meeting at least three working days prior to the session.
		8. The Authority intends to award the contract to one Bidder and invite them to deliver the Service.

##

## Indicative Procurement Timetable

* + 1. The indicative timetable for the procurement exercise is given in the table below. However, the Authority reserves the right to vary, amend or cancel the timetable or process at any stage prior to contract award. Where amendments are significant, the Authority may at its discretion extend the deadline for receipt of Tender Responses.

| **Procurement Stage**  | **Expected dates** |
| --- | --- |
| **Tender documents issued** | 16 April 2019 |
| **Deadline for receipt of clarification questions** | 24 April 2019 (12noon) |
| **Authority response to supplier questions** | 29 April 2019 |
| **Tender response deadline** | 15 May 2019 (5pm) |
| **Compliance Checks** | 16-17 May 2019 |
| **System demonstration** | 21 May 2019 |
| **Evaluation and Moderation** | 20 May – 6 June 2019 |
| **Notification of decision** | 10 June 2019 |
| **Contract Award and Transition/ Mobilisation Phase** | July – September 2019 |
| **Service commencement date**  | 1 October 2019 |

### Table 2: Procurement timetable. This is subject to change. Where there is a need to alter the timetable, Bidders shall be notified via the portal.

## Content and amendments

* + 1. The information contained in this ITT, the supporting documents and in any related written or oral communication is believed to be correct at the time of issue. However, the Authority will not accept any liability for its accuracy, adequacy or completeness and no warranty is given in that regard. This exclusion does not extend to any fraudulent misrepresentation made by the Authority.

### Clarifications about this ITT

* + 1. It is the responsibility of bidders to obtain at their own expense all additional information necessary for the preparation of their response to this ITT. No claims of insufficient knowledge will be entertained.
		2. You may submit any clarification questions you have relating to this ITT by no later than the date and time specified in the timetable above. The Authority will aim to respond to reasonable requests received before the deadline. Questions received after the deadline may not be answered.
		3. Please only submit such queries by email to the Authority at**:** tenders@ssro.gov.uk
		4. The title of your email should be “**Outsourced Finance Support Services 2019: Clarification Question”**. Any clarification questions should clearly reference the document and the relevant paragraph. To the extent possible, multiple questions should be aggregated rather than sent individually.
		5. Clarifications provided by the Authority will be published on Contracts Finder on or before the date specified in table 2.
		6. All questions and their answers will be published and circulated to all bidders without revealing the identity of the individual Bidder.
		7. Clarifications issued, where relevant, will form part of the contractual agreement between the Authority and the Contractor.

## Instructions for return of Tenders

* + 1. Bidders must return their Tender Response by email to the Authority at: tenders@ssro.gov.uk.
		2. The title of your email should be “**Outsourced Finance Support Service 2019: Tender Submission”**.
		3. Any additional documents should be provided as further attachments.
		4. Tender Responses must be returned by the date and time specified in the table 2 above.
		5. Any Tender Responses received after this date and time will not be considered. Tender Responses received prior to the deadline will be retained unopened until after the deadline for submission has lapsed.
		6. It is the Bidders’ responsibility to ensure that their Tender Responses are received no later than the stated date and time.
		7. The Authority accepts no liability whatsoever for Tenders Responses that are not received before the deadline, including for reasons of internet connectivity, transmission delays or errors.

## Transparency

* + 1. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“FOIA”) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (“EIR”) apply to the Authority. You should be aware of the Authority’s obligations and responsibilities under FOIA and EIR to disclose, on written request, recorded information held by the Authority. Information provided by you in connection with this procurement exercise, or with any contract that may be awarded as a result of this exercise, may be required by law to be disclosed, unless the Authority considers that an exemption can be applied.
		2. If you wish to designate information supplied as part of this response as confidential, or if you believe that its disclosure would be prejudicial to any person’s commercial interests, you must provide clear and specific detail as to the information concerned and the justification for it to not be disclosed. Such designation alone may not prevent disclosure if, in the Authority’s reasonable opinion, it is required by applicable legislation or policy, or where disclosure is required by the Information Commissioner, the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights) or a court.
		3. Additionally, for reasons of transparency, the Authority may publish its Tender documents on a publicly searchable website. The same applies to any contract entered into by the Authority as a result of this procurement exercise. By submitting a Tender Response, you agree that your participation in this procurement and any resultant contract may be made public. Where Tender documents or contracts are disclosed, the Authority will redact them as it considers necessary and, in doing so, will have regard to the exemptions in the FOIA or EIR.

## Canvassing and Bidder conduct

* + 1. Offering an inducement of any kind in relation to obtaining this or any other contract with the Authority will disqualify your Tender Response from being considered and may constitute a criminal offence.
		2. Bidders may be disqualified if they:
			- tell anyone else what their Tender price is or will be, before the submission deadline;
			- try to obtain any information about anyone else's Tender Response or proposed Tender Response before the submission deadline; or
			- make any arrangements with another organisation about whether or not they should Tender, or about their or your Tender price.
		3. Should it be determined that any bidder has been communicating with any other bidder in respect to this Tender, the Authority may, acting reasonably, disqualify both bidders.
		4. The Authority may investigate Tender Reponses, where the price appears to be abnormally low. If the bidder cannot provide substantial reasons for the low prices (which may include justifying the sustainability of the bid over the life of the contract), then the Authority may reject the Tender Response.
		5. You should not withdraw a Tender Response after the submission deadline. If you do so, and the SSRO is not satisfied with the reasons for withdrawal, then the SSRO may refuse to accept future Tenders from you.

## Conflicts of interest

* + 1. The Authority is keen to avoid any actual and/or potential conflicts of interest. Therefore, the Authority requires that bidders notify it immediately should there be any risk of a conflict of interest.
		2. Where a bidder fails to notify the Authority of a conflict that is later identified, the bidder may be disqualified.

## Acceptance of Tenders

* + 1. The Authority reserves the right to discontinue this procurement at any time or not to award any contract, without liability, and does not bind itself to accept any Tender Response.
		2. Bidders are advised that in the event of their Tender Response being successful, the contract between the Authority and the Contractor will only come into existence once it has been duly executed in writing by both parties.
		3. No other purported method of acceptance (e.g. telephone call) or any action by the bidder (e.g. commencement of any work) shall be binding upon the Authority or have any contractual effect.
		4. Nothing contained in this ITT shall constitute an agreement. Receipt by the bidder of this ITT does not imply the existence of a contract or commitment by or with the Authority for any purpose and bidders should note that the ITT may not result in the award of any business.

## Bid costs

* + 1. Tender Responses are to be prepared and submitted at the cost of the bidder. The Authority will not be liable for any costs incurred by the bidder in the preparation and submission of a Tender Response. For the avoidance of doubt, bid costs include fees incurred by the bidder directly or indirectly as a result of preparation and submission of a Tender Response.

## Sub-contractors and consortia

* + 1. If you are bidding for this contract in association with another supplier, you must explain the structure of your Tender Response. If you do not do so, then your Tender Response may be disqualified.
		2. Bidders must indicate whether they are reliant on any third parties for any aspects of fulfilling the service as specified, or if this is a consortium Tender Response. In such cases you should provide full details of sub-contractors, the nature of the relationship and the intended balance of work to be completed, and copies of quality assurance arrangements operating between the sub-contractors. Failure to provide this information will result in the Tender Response being disqualified.
		3. Bidders and Contractors must not, without the prior consent of the Authority, appoint sub-contractors or add consortia partners who have not been declared as part of the initial submission. The Authority may refuse consent for any reason, acting reasonably. This is to ensure that services are delivered in a timely, good quality and cost-effective fashion.
		4. The Authority may request a copy of the consortia legal arrangements or the form of contract to be entered into between the Contractor and any proposed sub-contractor. Failure to provide this information may lead to the Tender Response being disqualified or the Authority withholding its consent to the appointment of sub-contractors.

## Tender response requirements

* + 1. All Tender Responses must include the following:
			- A completed and signed Form of Tender (**Appendix 1**);
			- Response to Tender Questions (along with any supporting evidence);
			- A completed Pricing Schedule (**Part D** to this ITT);
			- Evidence of required insurance cover and levels (sent as an attachment);
			- Consortia/sub-contracting structural proposals (where relevant); and
			- A completed and signed Statement of Conduct (**Appendix 2**).
		2. Tender Responses which omit any of the documents in 14.1 above, or which include documents that are not properly completed may be rejected.
		3. No qualifications, caveats or unauthorised alterations are to be included or made to the documentation supplied (including to Part C: Contract Terms). Tender Responses containing such qualifications, caveats or unauthorised alterations shall be rejected.
		4. Any additional pre-existing material which may expand upon your Tender Response may be included as appendices with cross-references to this material in the main body of your Tender Response, but only where expressly permitted within the Response to Tender Questions.

### Validity of proposals

* + 1. The Form of Tender requires that Tender Responses remain valid for acceptance for **90 days** from the deadline for receipt of Tender Responses. If this statement is excluded, amended or qualified, the bid will be rejected.

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# Annex 1 – Interpretation of Terms

[*In the event of a conflict between Annex 1 and the definitions within the Part C: Contract Terms, the definitions in Part C: Contract Terms shall take precedence*]

| Term or Abbreviation | Definition |
| --- | --- |
| Authority | means the Single Sourcing Regulations Office (SSRO); |
| Authority Requirements | means the key and additional deliverables in the specification of service requirements; Part C;  |
| Bidder | a legal entity responding to this ITT; |
| Commencement date | has the same meaning given to it under the Contract; |
| Contractor | means the successful Bidder who is awarded a contract; |
| Contract | the contract awarded to the Successful Bidder in the form set out at Part C;  |
| Contract | The document titled “Part C: Contract Terms” accompanying the ITT;  |
| Evaluation Framework | Part B: Evaluation Framework of this ITT |
| Implementation Services | Refers to Contractor actions in deploying the facilities and training in preparation for service delivery; |
| Services | has the meaning given to it in clause 1 (Definitions) of the Contract. |
| Specification | The Authority’s requirements for the Services, as set out in Schedule 4 of the Contract (Part C) |
| Tender Response | a Bidder’s proposed solution provided in response to ITT;  |