



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Bidder Pack

**Title: Harmonisation and Standardisation in the
Field of Next Generation Sequencing (NGS)
Analysis for Food Authenticity Testing**

ITT Number: C5263

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Section 1: The Invitation

Defra group Commercial on behalf of Defra group and its Arm's Length Bodies invite you to bid in this competition.

The Bidder Pack comes in two parts.

This first part, **The Core Requirements**, provides details of the General Requirements, Government Transparency Agenda and Government Priorities.

The second part, **The Procurement Specific Requirements**, provides details of the Specification Requirements, Terms and Conditions of Contract, Evaluation Methodology, Procurement Timetable, and Definitions.

The Definitions that apply to both parts can be found in Section 7.

The tendering process seeks to determine the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT). The Authority will evaluate the Tenders using the tender evaluation criteria and weightings listed in Section 4, Evaluation Methodology.

The Opportunity

The opportunity is advertised by Defra group Commercial on behalf of the Authority. The project will be managed by an Officer from Defra.

Introduction

Defra's Food Authenticity Research Programme is at the forefront of applying cutting edge technology to develop fit for purpose analytical testing methods to verify food labelling and composition to support the enforcement of food law. Research developed under the programme helps to ensure the authenticity and integrity of the UK's food supply chain, ensuring it remains resilient to food fraud, maintaining and improving consumer confidence.

A powerful emerging technology, starting to be applied by a number of organisations and laboratories for food authenticity investigation, is NGS or High Throughput Sequencing (HTS). It has the potential to deliver a step-change in how food standards testing is undertaken by allowing high-throughput, non-targeted identification of food ingredients. The growing application of NGS for food authenticity investigation has highlighted a need to develop standards and harmonise approaches for application in a food setting to ensure methods are fit for purpose, are validated in a harmonised way and that deliver results that can be interpreted with confidence to enable effective use for food authenticity analysis.

There are a number of NGS platforms now available for HTS, using a variety of different chemistries and additional sequencing technologies are still being developed (Defra project FA0160). As a result, there is a degree of variability in method performance and validation approaches, making it difficult to compare results. Working towards agreed performance targets in this field will enable results generated in different labs and on different platforms to be compared and findings to be interpreted with confidence.

Further information about this opportunity is provided in Section 2: The Specification of Requirements.

Procurement Plan and Timetable

The timetable below is subject to change from time to time as notified by the Authority. All Tenderers will be informed via the Authority's [e-Sourcing System](#).

Procurement Activity	Anticipated Date	
Publish Contracts Finder Notice and Bidder Pack	24 th November 2022	
Clarification deadline	Date	Time
	21 st December 2023	12:00 GMT
Bidder Pack / ITT response date	Date	Time
	04 th January 2023	12:00 GMT
Compliance Checks	05 th January 2023	
Evaluation	04 th January 2023 – 18 th January 2023	
Moderation Meeting	19 th January 2023	
Produce Contract Award Report and Draft Letters	26 th January 2022	
Approval of Contract Award Report	30 th January 2023	
Issue Notification of Intention to Award letters	31 st January 2023	
Finalise Contract and obtain approvals (if required)	31 st January 2023	
Contract award / contract issued	01 st February 2023	
Contract Start Date	08 th February 2023	
Publish Contract Award Notice and Redacted Contract	08 th March 2023	
Contract End Date	30 th August 2024	
Possible Extension Date (6 months)	30 th January 2025	

All timescales are set using a 24-hour clock and when referring to “days” it means calendar days unless otherwise specified (for example, working days).

Variant Tenders

The Authority shall not accept variant Tenders.

For the avoidance of doubt, if the Authority has reserved a right to waive a requirement in this Bidder Pack and chooses to exercise such discretion, the Tender will not be considered a variant Tender.

Pricing Anomalies

If in the opinion of the Authority your Tender contains any pricing anomalies (for example apparent discrepancies between the financial submission and other parts of your response) the Authority may seek clarification. If the clarification response indicates that the pricing anomaly was the result of a clear and obvious error, in the interest of fairness the resulting change will be taken into consideration. If the clarification response results in a change to the initial tendered Commercial Response and price, it will not be taken into account.

Section 2: The Specification of Requirements

The Authority is the UK Government Department responsible for the environment, food and farming and rural affairs. The Authority's priorities are to secure a healthy natural environment; a sustainable, low-carbon economy; a thriving farming sector and a sustainable, healthy and secure food supply. Further information on the Authority can be found at: Defra

Background

Introduction

This document sets out the requirements for a new research project: Harmonisation and standardisation in the field of Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) analysis for food authenticity testing.

Defra's Food Authenticity Research Programme is at the forefront of applying cutting edge technology to develop fit for purpose analytical testing methods to verify food labelling and composition to support the enforcement of food law. Research developed under the programme helps to ensure the authenticity and integrity of the UK's food supply chain, ensuring it remains resilient to food fraud, maintaining and improving consumer confidence.

A powerful emerging technology, starting to be applied by a number of organisations and laboratories for food authenticity investigation, is NGS or High Throughput Sequencing (HTS). It has the potential to deliver a step-change in how food standards testing is undertaken by allowing high-throughput, non-targeted identification of food ingredients. The growing application of NGS for food authenticity investigation has highlighted a need to develop standards and harmonise approaches for application in a food setting to ensure methods are fit for purpose, are validated in a harmonised way and that deliver results that can be interpreted with confidence to enable effective use for food authenticity analysis.

There are a number of NGS platforms now available for HTS, using a variety of different chemistries and additional sequencing technologies are still being developed (Defra project [FA0160](#)). As a result, there is a degree of variability in method performance and validation approaches, making it difficult to compare results. Working towards agreed performance targets in this field will enable results generated in different labs and on different platforms to be compared and findings to be interpreted with confidence.

Aims

The requirement is for the development of performance target standards and best practice advice for the application of NGS for food authenticity testing (with a focus on metabarcoding approaches) to improve the robustness of NGS methods as a tool to support food analysis and food law enforcement.

Defra is looking to commission a project to address the following aims:

- 1) To establish suitable minimum performance criteria for qualitative NGS metabarcoding approaches that can be applied across different food matrices and platforms. To develop guidelines/advice as necessary to support understanding and application of the criteria and wider best practice in order to ensure NGS approaches are applied to food authenticity testing in a way which is fit for purpose

- 2) To demonstrate application of the criteria and guidelines in a laboratory setting through validation of a candidate NGS metabarcoding method for food authenticity analysis.

Tenderers are invited to propose a work plan in line with the aims and objectives set out in the specification, the Authority will also welcome innovative approaches to addressing the research question which would achieve the same outcome. It must build upon and be in line with existing and recent previous work in this area, some of which is detailed below.

Research Questions

Defra is seeking analytical expertise to establish standards and guidance that will benefit the analytical community through facilitating harmonised development and validation of qualitative NGS methods for food authenticity analysis. The Authority anticipates demonstration that the performance targets and guidance developed are fit for purpose through their application in practice as part of this project.

Background and Policy Context

Defra's vision is for a world-leading food and drink industry that is competitive, resilient, trusted by the consumer with a strong reputation for the highest standards of food safety and quality. Incidents of food and drink mislabelling, and fraud can damage public trust in the integrity of the food chain and impact on the competitiveness and resilience of UK businesses.

Drawing on the UK's science excellence, the Authority is developing ways to unlock innovation through the development of novel methods based on cutting edge science. The development of robust analytical tools, to help verify product labelling and support food law enforcement, plays a key part in improving confidence in food authenticity for consumers, businesses and the food industry, whilst aiding the outpacing of food fraud attempts.

Food fraud drivers, such as the economic climate, global markets, availability of raw materials and ingredients and regulatory developments are constantly changing. Defra's Food Authenticity Research Programme aims to develop fit for purpose analytical testing methods to help better identify and discourage food fraud and ensure the UK has the testing capability to respond to any future fraud incident.

NGS (or HTS) involves the sequencing of millions of fragments of DNA simultaneously, at high speed and at relatively low cost. Given the routine application of DNA-based methods for food authenticity testing, the application of NGS has been identified as an emerging technology with significant potential. NGS has the benefit of not requiring the use of standards for every species of interest, this non-targeted approach offers benefits over existing targeted DNA-based methods routinely used in food authenticity analysis. The methodology is already being applied by a number of organisations and laboratories for food authenticity investigation both to identify ingredients themselves (e.g. Gense et al., 2021; Preckel et al., 2021; Ripp et al., 2014) and to analyse microbial communities associated with foods to identify their origin (Defra project FA0160). It has most commonly been applied to the DNA of the food product ingredients themselves and has been explored in quantitative determination of ingredients with commodities such as herbs and spices. Evidence, however, has shown that results can be variable, impacting on the robustness of NGS for verification of food authenticity with regard to the quantitative assessment of ingredients.

Other limitations identified include reliance of NGS techniques on databases; how they've been curated and how representative they are and in the interpretation of results.

Defra convened a Technical Subgroup of its Authenticity Methods Working Group (AMWG) and other industry experts to discuss the applications of NGS to food authenticity, explore the concerns and limitations and identify where further research efforts are required to ensure fitness for purpose. The group concluded that NGS is a valuable research tool with the potential to be widely applied to food authenticity, quality and safety analysis. As with any new technology, full method validation must be undertaken to ensure fitness for purpose of the method, inclusive of looking at potential amplification bias, the presence of PCR inhibitory compounds, and processing conditions which may reduce DNA concentration. Further research and validation is needed to ensure fitness for purpose, to fully realise these applications and overcome some of the current barriers. Research priorities identified by the group included working towards harmonisation and standardisation in the field of NGS analysis for food authenticity testing. A statement outlining the groups conclusions was published [here](#)

[\(Authenticity Methodology Working Group view on use of Next Generation Sequencing for food authenticity testing.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)\)](#).

Relevant Related Projects

A previous project, funded by Defra (FA0160), explored the feasibility of a metagenomics approach, using NGS, to determine food origin ([Defra, UK - Science Search](#)), which included a review into current uses and future applications of NGS for food authenticity testing. This work also reviewed validation approaches for NGS and found that validation of HTS assays for food authenticity are not currently well advanced. The review provided an overview of issues to consider when designing validation assays, suggesting a modular validation approach may help address some of the challenges around assay validation.

Defra has also co-funded production of an introductory e-seminar on procuring service providers to undertake NGS analysis <http://www.foodauthenticity.uk/training>

There has also been recent and ongoing research and development of NGS methods for food authenticity testing, outside of Defra funded work, which will need to be considered, alongside wider evidence, when proposing a work plan. This includes:

- The Decathlon project focused on the development of DNA-based applications for identification of food pathogens as well as issues with genetically modified organisms. Part of the project included the development of an NGS approach to amplicon analysis for detection and identification of unknown GMOs. <https://cordis.europa.eu/article/id/209833-dna-analysis-from-food-pathogens-to-gmo-and-border-control>
- Research, as part of the larger Decathlon programme, was also carried out into the development and validation of a multi-locus DNA metabarcoding method for wildlife species identification. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5632295/>
- ISO are currently undertaking some standardisation work for NGS methods. One committee is standardising methods for Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) and there are 2 technical committees relevant to food:

- ISOTC34/SC16 is looking at horizontal methods for molecular biomarkers analysis <https://www.iso.org/committee/560239.html>
- TC 276 is looking at biotechnology analytical methods. <https://www.iso.org/committee/4514241.html#:~:text=ISO%2FTC%20276%20Biotechnology%20will%20work%20closely%20with%20related,organisations%20to%20avoid%20duplications%20and%20overlapping%20standardization%20activities.>
- CEN TC460 have a working group currently standardising general considerations and definitions related to Validation of non-targeted testing methods in food and feed authenticity.
- Thermofisher are carrying out an inter-laboratory study of their NGS food authenticity workflow for multi-species screening and identification to create a dataset that will accelerate the use of NGS in food authenticity. <https://www.food-safety.com/articles/6969-international-interlaboratory-scientific-study-for-standardization-of-next-generation-sequencing-in-food-authenticity-testing>
- Defra would recommend tenderers read the AMWG guidelines for Defra Contractors involved in the development and validation of food authenticity assays. These can be supplied on request.

Key Objectives

Project Objectives

1. To establish appropriate measurement criteria and assay performance characteristics for qualitative NGS metabarcoding approaches for food authenticity analysis
2. To produce guidance/best practice advice on critical steps in the development and application of NGS metabarcoding methods for food authenticity such as optimising sample preparation, target enrichment strategies and interpretation and reporting of results.
3. To design a fit for purpose validation approach for NGS metabarcoding analysis
4. To undertake a feasibility study, using the outputs established from the above objectives to implement a validation exercise for a candidate NGS metabarcoding analysis (e.g. Identification of meat species ingredients by 16S metabarcoding) to demonstrate the method can be successfully validated in practice using the proposed best practice approach.

The Contractor must develop a plan of work to deliver the above objectives. It is suggested that the following areas are incorporated into the workplan,

- Establishing the current state of play by working with experts in the field, combined with reviewing the literature, to identify and map existing relevant harmonisation and standardisation activities and guidance documents in relation to NGS applications to food.
- Reviewing and evaluating these activities/documents to assess how they fit with the objectives of this project, where they can be built on/incorporated into the planned work and where gaps exist which would benefit from further research. This includes identifying where there could be read across from harmonised approaches in other related areas e.g. clinical application of NGS methods.

- Consideration of how database infrastructure, creation and maintenance impacts the fitness for purpose of NGS food authenticity metabarcoding approaches.
- Review of relevant Proficiency Testing (PT) schemes that may be applicable to NGS metabarcoding for food ingredients and assessment of their suitability for supporting labs to demonstrate fit for purpose NGS testing. Identification of any gaps that may improve provision of PT schemes to support NGS metabarcoding application for food.
- Evidence-based recommendations on the potential to establish performance targets for semi-quantitative and quantitative NGS applications and identification of key issues and research gaps that would facilitate progress towards this goal.
- Throughout the project, at the various stages, engagement with stakeholders and experts in the field, nationally and internationally is expected to ensure no duplication of effort and to enhance buy-in and recognition of any standards and guidance developed.
- Proposing suitable publication and dissemination activities to maximise impact and including engagement with Defra's expert group, AMWG as the project develops.

Deliverables

The Contractor shall deliver the following outputs.

A project plan, identifying and setting out the key areas of work and how these address the aims and objectives of the specification. It should also include a timeline with the project broken down into a set of milestones and deliverables against due dates.

An interim report on an EVID 3 template (made available by the Authority to the successful Contractor) outlining the project progress against objectives, milestones and deliverables.

Presentations to the spring and autumn Authenticity Methods Working Group (AMWG) meetings of independent experts to summarise the progress of the project and seek a steer on specific aspects of the project. The Contractor must provide Defra with a slide pack and any accompanying papers at least a fortnight prior to the meeting in an electronic format to allow Working Group members the opportunity to read them, although last minute additional updates are welcome.

A draft final report on an EVID 4 template describing the project work, how the aims and objectives have been met and any supporting evidence. The report shall contain an executive summary, explanation of the project and how it was carried out, including details of the findings, any guidelines produced, development and outcomes of any validation exercises and any recommendations for further research and development. The executive summary shall be a 2–4 page summary of the main findings and recommendations and shall refrain from simply bulleting the points in the main report, but should take a wider look at what the findings mean in the policy context.

A peer reviewed publication of the final report and involvement in dissemination activities such as posters/presentations to Defra teams and at relevant conferences to promote the project and the research findings. A knowledge exchange pack (4/5 slides plus 2-page executive summary) suitable for the intelligent non-scientist should be provided.

Regular project meetings where the Contractor shall provide updates, summaries of emerging findings, supported by the data developed under the project and evidence of the quality assurance activities undertaken.

The project will commence with successful Contractor(s) meeting with Defra officials to refine study scope, methods, and relevant details of approach.

Expertise Required

Bidders will need:

- Proven experience/expertise with NGS technologies.
- Experience/expertise with method validation principles and understanding of standardisation processes; preferably including working with food matrices; or within a food analysis setting
- Familiarity with the relevant literature and approaches used to test food authenticity.
- To be able to synthesise existing literature and clearly summarise and describe key findings.
- The ability to critically analyse evidence and identify and explain the underlying limitations and drawbacks.
- Good drafting and report writing skills, including the ability to communicate complex technical information.
- Strong project management skills to ensure that deliverables are produced to time and quality.
- Experience of successful collaboration with experts in the field

Proposal

The proposal shall include:

Tender evaluation will be conducted in accordance with standard Defra procedures. Assessment will be based on technical merit and value for money against the following criteria:

- Appraisal of specification and relevance to scientific objectives.
- General and detailed approach to tasks, methodologies and research plan.
- Work plan and milestones.
- Contractor's team suitability, experience, and track record (CVs of lead and partner organisations).
- Financial estimates.

Tenders will be assessed by a panel, comprising representatives from Defra and external expertise. Tenderers should ensure that their tender clearly explains the expertise that their proposal will bring to the project and highlight any added value. Tenderers shall note that Defra is not obliged to accept the lowest cost or any tender.

Proposed Timelines and Deliverables

The Authority envisage that this will be an approximately 18-month project, ending in FY 24/25.

Event	Proposed date(s)
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Start-up meeting	At week 1
Inception report	At week 3
Quarterly progress report/meeting/minutes	Every 3 months
EVID 3 receipt	At month 12
Presentation of draft results	Before month 16
Draft EVID4 received (for internal/external peer review)	
Final EVID4 received, with reviewer comments addressed	At month 18
Knowledge exchange pack received	

Reporting Requirements

Start Up:

The Contractor will be expected to attend a project start-up meeting with the members of the project board. The Contractor must be prepared to discuss the project in detail and provide a presentation of their proposed work programme to meet the project objectives. The meeting will address the following:

- Clarification of objectives and timescales.
- Proposed methodology and work programme.
- Agreement on level of Defra support.

Output (I) - Minutes of start-up meeting (within 1 week)

Produce an updated project profile which gives a brief (1 side of A4) description of the project. The profile should include changes discussed in the inception meeting with details of the purpose of the project, the context, the methodology, the objectives, the benefits, the outputs, and how they will be used.

Output (II) - project profile/inception report (within 3 weeks of start-up meeting)

Main Study:

Output (III) - the Contractor must provide Defra's project manager with a brief quarterly progress report and meeting minutes from a quarterly update meeting. The progress report will include a summary of the work completed to date, confirmation that work is running to time, or warning if it is not (and a plan to bring project back on track), work to be completed in the following month and any issues, risks or problems.

Output (IV) – the Contractor must provide Defra's project manager with a project report using an [Annual/interim Report form \(EVID3\)](#) each year of the project if the project is to last longer than a year, or at the six month point if the project is to last a year or thereabout.

Project Closure:

Output (V) - oral presentation of draft results

The Contractor will be required to attend a project finalisation meeting with the project executive, project manager and members of the project board. The Contractor is required to discuss the project in detail and provide a presentation of their draft final evidence and draft recommendations, demonstrating how this met the project objectives.

Output (VI) - draft final report and summary

The Contractor is required to produce a draft final report, including executive summary, using an [Evidence Project Final Report form \(EVID4\)](#). This will contain the evidence and guidance resulting from the project, which will be reviewed internally by the project officer and potentially other members of Defra, and possibly through external peer-review. Both scientific and general editorial amendments will be considered. This should be provided two months prior to the project's end date to give time for an internal and/or external peer review to be undertaken.

Output (VII) – final report

The Contractor should correct any suggested changes to Output (VI), to provide the project officer with a final version of the report. The contractor should address/respond to all changes suggested by Defra or peer-reviewers.

Output (VIII) - knowledge exchange pack.

The Contractor is required to produce a brief knowledge exchange pack (4/5 slides plus 2-page executive summary) suitable for the intelligent non-scientist. This will contain project background and justification, aims, brief methods, findings and the implications of these findings to Defra policy.

Dissemination of Project Outputs

Defra will retain ownership of all produced output from this research and final sign-off on all publications. It is expected that Defra will publish, adhering to the publication style of government, see guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/style-guide>. Accessibility of the final report should also be considered (e.g. colour choices in figures). Draft and interim reports will be confidential including throughout external peer review.

Payment Methods

Contractors must complete the commercial workbook in the commercial section on the e-tendering system. Suppliers should input hourly rate and number of hours input. This will allow further insight into the amounts of time that staff are dedicating to the project. The project should be priced by deliverable with no monies due to the supplier until the Authority satisfactorily accepts each deliverable. Payment will be in accordance with deliverable/milestone set out in the workbook. The ITT will make it clear that this is a fixed price project with no price incentivisation or opportunities to reprice.

Additional Information

The performance of the Contractor will be monitored through the successful completion of tasks and delivery of required outputs. Approval of outputs will be given by Defra and communicated to the contractor through the project manager.

Tenders should indicate specialist persons or organisations with whom they are associating (cross-functional teams and/or consortia), but no exclusive arrangement should be made at tender stage. An example of such association might be where specialist expertise might be best sourced from other organisations. Upon acceptance of this team no changes will be permitted thereafter during the execution of the contract, unless there are exceptional circumstances, with agreement of the Project Officer.

The Contractor's team shall ensure that access to the most appropriate data is secured. Defra will maintain the data ownership of the project.

Clarifications

Specific questions will only be addressed where Defra considers them to be relevant to all tenderers. In such circumstances, the question and answer will be circulated to those who have expressed interest in tendering for this Defra project.

References

Genise, K., Peterseil, V., Licina, A., Wagner, M., Cichna-Markl, M., Dobrovolny, S., Hocegger, R. Development of a DNA Metabarcoding Method for the Identification of Bivalve Species in Seafood Products. *Foods* 2021, 10, 2618. <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods10112618>

Ripp, F., Kromholz, C.F., Liu, Y. et al. All-Food-Seq (AFS): a quantifiable screen for species in biological samples by deep DNA sequencing. *BMC Genomics* 15, 639 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2164-15-639>

Preckel, L., Brünen-Nieweler, C., Denay, G., Petersen, H., Cichna-Markl, M., Dobrovolny, S., Hocegger, R. Identification of Mammalian and Poultry Species in Food and Pet Food Samples Using 16S rDNA Metabarcoding. *Foods* 2021, 10, 2875. <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods10112875>

Section 3: Terms and Conditions of Contract

The Terms and Conditions of Contract for this procurement are those terms on the **Research and Development Terms and Conditions (R&D)**.

The Authority proposes to enter into Contract(s) for a maximum period of (18) months with the successful Tenderer(s) from **08/02/2023 - 13/08/2024**.

The anticipated commencement date is **08/02/2023**.

Section 4: Evaluation Methodology

The overall aim of the evaluation process is to select the Tender that is the most economically advantageous to the Authority, having regard to the Authority's overall objectives and the criteria set out below.

Evaluation of Tenders comprise of the stages set out in the table below.

The Authority will carry out its evaluations of the Technical and Commercial elements according to the criteria, sub-criteria and weightings set out in the table below and **Appendix C**. The detailed questions and guidance are set out in the Authority's e-Sourcing system:

Evaluation of Responses

Tenders will be evaluated on technical and price using the evaluation criteria set out in Bravo to determine which response is the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT). The Authority will award the Contract to the Tenderer which submits the most economically advantageous tender which will be the highest scoring Tender after the following weightings have been applied.

Technical: 70%; Commercial 30%

Evaluation of Responses will be undertaken by a panel appointed by the Authority. Each panel member will first undertake an independent evaluation of the Responses applying the relevant evaluation criteria for each question. Then, a moderation meeting will be held at which the evaluation panel will reach a consensus on the marking of each question.

During the consensus meeting, the decision may be taken that a Response will not be carried forward to the next evaluation stage if the consensus view is that the Tenderer has failed to meet any minimum or mandatory requirements, and/or provided a non-compliant response.

***Please Note:**

Tenderers must be aware that all bids are submitted in acceptance of agreed Defra terms and conditions of contract. Any clarifications regarding terms and conditions must be discussed & agreed during the tender period. No discussion of terms and conditions of contract shall be held following tender submission. Failure to agree with the terms and conditions of contract post tender shall result in a bid being deemed non-compliant.

Selection Questionnaire - Financial standing

The Authority will review the economic information provided as part of the Selection Questionnaire response to evaluate a Tenderer's economic and financial standing. The Authority's evaluation will be based on all the information reviewed and will not be

determined by a single indicator. If, based on its assessment of the information provided in a Response, the Authority decides that a Tenderer does not meet the Authority's required level of economic standing, the Authority may:

- ask for additional information, including information relating to the Tenderer's parent company, if applicable; and/or
- require a parent company guarantee or a performance bond.

If the Authority decides that a parent company guarantee or performance bond is required, the Authority will reject a Response if the Tenderer is unable to offer a commitment to make such provision. In addition to the information provided in a Response, the Authority may, at its discretion, consult Dun & Bradstreet reports and other credit rating or equivalent reports depending on where a Tenderer is located.

The Authority's assessment of economic and financial standing will consider financial strength and risk of business failure. Financial strength is based on tangible net worth and is rated on a scale of 5A (strongest) to H (weakest) obtained from Dun & Bradstreet. There are also classifications for negative net worth and net worth undetermined (insufficient information). Financial strength will be assessed relative to the estimated annual contract value.

The Authority will also consider annual turnover.

In the case of a joint venture or a consortium bid, the annual turnover is calculated by combining the turnover of the relevant organisations in each of the last two financial years.

Risk of Business Failure is rated on a scale of 1 (minimal) to 4 (significant) obtained from Dun & Bradstreet. There is also a classification of insufficient information. The Authority regards a score of 4 as indicating inadequate economic and financial standing for this procurement. The Authority will also calculate and evaluate the Tenderer's:

- operating performance: growth or reductions in sales, gross profit, operating profit, profit before tax and earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, amortisation, exceptional items and profit/loss on sale of businesses;
- liquidity: net current assets, movements in cash flow from operations, working capital and quick ratios, and average collection and payments periods; and
- financial structure: gearing ratios and interest cover.

Bids will be assessed against the following criteria:

If a Tenderer receives a 'Fail' in either question **E01 or E02** they will be eliminated from the procurement.

If a score of twenty (20) or less is awarded to a Tenderer's response to any scored question **E03- E06**; the Authority may choose to reject the Tender.

E01 Sustainability (Weighting - Pass/Fail)

The Authority has set itself challenging commitments and targets to improve the environmental and social impacts of its estate management, operation and procurement. These support the Government's green commitments. The policies are included in the Authority's sustainable procurement policy statement published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defra-s-sustainable-procurement-policy-statement>

Within this context, please explain your approach to delivering the services and how you intend to reduce negative sustainability impacts. Please discuss the methods that you will employ to demonstrate and monitor the effectiveness of your organisation's approach.

Evaluation Criteria:

Your response must:

- Demonstrate that there is a sustainable policy in-place.
- Provide evidence how you will reduce the environmental impacts of delivering this contract that may include the following;
- Using innovative sustainable tools, techniques and technologies
- The procedures and systems in place for communicating what needs to be done to improve sustainability to those engaged on this contract;
- Explain how you measure sustainability performance and be able to report to the Authority on progress if required.

A Fail will be allocated to those responses that are not able to demonstrate any evidence of addressing sustainability.

Please upload your response with filename 'Your Company Name_E01'. Your response must be no more than 2 side of A4, minimum font size 10. Your Sustainability Policy will be accepted in addition to this limit.

E02 Equality and Diversity Policy (Weighting - Pass/Fail)

The Authority is committed to promoting equality and diversity within its operations and service delivery. Please describe your organisation's commitment to equality and diversity and how you ensure that compliance with relevant legislation is achieved and maintained. Please describe how you will promote equality and diversity in relation to the delivery of this Contract. Please also provide a copy of your equality and diversity policy or an equivalent document.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Includes a copy of the Tenderer's equality and diversity policy or an equivalent document which shows their organisation's commitment to equality and diversity and confirms their compliance with relevant legislation.
- Describes how the Tenderer will promote equality and diversity in relation to the delivery of this Contract.

A Fail will be allocated to those responses that are not able to demonstrate any evidence of addressing equality and diversity.

Please upload your response with filename 'Your Company Name_E02'. Your response must be no more than 2 side of A4, minimum font size 10. Your Equality and Diversity Policy will be accepted in addition to this limit.

E03 – Understanding of the Policy Context (Weighting: 10%)

Please set out your understanding of the policy/research context, how this will inform and shape this project and the project's relevance to Government goals. Outline your own understanding of the projects aims and objectives. Summarise your understanding of the current gaps in the research and the key issues/challenges that the project needs to address.

Evaluation criteria for E03

Higher marks will be awarded to those who demonstrate:

- a clear understanding of the policy and research context of the study and
- identification of key technical issues and analytical challenges that the project will address.

Your response must be a maximum of one side of A4, font size 11. Please upload a document with the filename: 'E03_Your Company Name'.

E04 – Approach, Methodology and Outputs (Weighting: 50%)

Please set out your approach/project design and provide a detailed methodology including how this will address the research question and meet the aims outlined in the specification, including relevance to policy and key literature.

Your response should include:

- Justification for the approach you plan to take and a detailed explanation of how your methodology will achieve the objectives and outputs as set out in the specification (innovation is encouraged).
- Demonstration that the proposed methodology is technically sounds, realistic, and achievable in the time-frame.
- An outline of what will be delivered and when (broken down by objective and task) and indicate any interdependence of milestones (i.e. the extent to which the success of one objective depends on the successful completion of another). Your workplan should include adequate time for review of deliverables.

- Please include a list of deliverables, project outputs and dissemination/knowledge exchange plans. Consider the expected outputs which may arise from this project, identify key audiences for the results and outline your plans for knowledge exchange and communication of results to raise awareness/encourage adoption. Include a brief description of how you anticipate the results will be used and by whom.

Please use the aims and objectives as stated in the Specification of Requirement or explain why you propose to revise them. If your proposal will deliver additional objectives or includes optional additional work packages, please clarify these and separately cost any optional work packages.

The approaches and work plan will be included in the contract issued to the successful Tenderer, therefore please restrict your entry to the salient points and set these out clearly and concisely. Gantt charts/flow charts are welcomed as appropriate and can be included as appendices.

Evaluation criteria for E04

Higher marks will be awarded to those who present:

- A well-justified approach and a robust, detailed and credible methodology to meet or exceed the objectives set out in this specification, clearly using the evidence to underpin the development of project outputs.
- A realistic and deliverable work plan, with key milestone and deliverable dates. The programme format should be generic, commencing from award (Week 0) and should show each activity in the project itemised under each specific objective, with start and end times, timing of proposed progress meetings and scheduled dates for project deliverables. Please note that Defra pays for work on completion of deliverables/milestones, so delivery dates should be realistic and achievable. Please note pricing should not be included anywhere in the technical response and should be restricted to the commercial response.
- Knowledge exchange and dissemination plan which demonstrates good knowledge of relevant stakeholders and provides confidence that relevant stakeholders will be aware of project outputs, understand their limitations and use them.

Your response must be a maximum of 5 sides of A4 (including figures and charts), font size 11. Please upload document with filename: 'E04 *Your Company Name*'

E05 – Expertise and Experience (Weighting: 25%)

Please provide details of the proposed project team outlining their respective roles, responsibilities, expertise and experience.

Your response should include:

- Detail of the project team structure, including an organogram, identifying Key Personnel.
- Demonstration that key individuals have relevant expertise, research credentials and experience to undertake the proposed project and deliver a successful outcome. If using a consortia or sub-contracting approach, please include information on all

partners/sub-contractors, justification for their inclusion, and the skills and experience members will bring to the project team.

- Your track record in managing and successfully completing similar projects of the type proposed in the specification of requirements.
- Please provide a Resourcing Table breakdown (example shown below) showing the allocation of time across different components of the project by all key individual members of the proposed team (can be included as an appendix). Tenderers should ensure that the detail corresponds with the commercial submission for staff costs
- You may include a short CV for key individuals of the proposed team, outlining their expertise in relation to the project (maximum 2 pages per person, included in the annex). Include any skills team members have which will be applicable and utilised during the project.

Evaluation criteria for E05:

Higher marks will be awarded to those who:

- Explain how your project teams' scientific expertise, capability and experience will deliver the objectives presented in the specification and the methodological approach you have outlined.
- Provide the breadth and depth of relevant skills, knowledge and experience of team members and any other sub-contractors/consortia organisations, and how these are relevant to meeting project requirements.
- Demonstrate previous success of team members in delivering relevant comparable projects, including managing and completion of projects, delivering to timescales/budgets, working with stakeholders and policy makers.
- Demonstrate the size and structure of the proposed project team is sufficient to ensure that adequate resources have been allocated for all of the required roles and responsibilities with a clear demonstration of the time input from key individuals.

Your response must be a maximum of 5 sides of A4 (excluding CV's which may be added as further attachments for Key Personnel), font size 11. Please upload document with filename: 'E05 *Your Company Name*'

Resourcing Tables

	Name					Total days	
Days	Grade					For task	For objective
Objective 1 xxxx							
	Task 1.1						
	Task 1.2						
Objective 2 xxxx							
	Task 2.1						
	Task 2.2						
	Task 2.2						
etc							
Total days for team members							

Across whole project - days by staff grade	
Grade x	
Grade y	
Grade x	
Total	

E06 – Project Management, Quality Assurance, Risk Management and Mitigation (weighting: 15%)

Please provide details of the proposed project management arrangements, including draft timelines and communication with Defra.

Please identify the individual(s) who will have overall responsibility for the contract and a representative available for day-to-day contact with Defra's contract manager. If relevant, include details of any subcontracting arrangements and how this will be managed.

Please provide details of how you intend to quality assure work undertaken as part of this contract and outputs so that deliverables are provided efficiently, to a high standard and on time. Please identify the key risks associated with this contract and provide details of risk mitigation.

Your response must include the below.

- Demonstrate a robust approach to project management with a description of how this will be implemented, including in relation to change management, issues escalation and quality control. Include how the team will be managed, particularly if managing a multidisciplinary team or a consortium

- Provide details of the strategies, policies or systems you will use to ensure the delivery of the project meets quality requirements, including work delivered by sub-contractors or through consortium arrangements.
- Provide a 'risk register' with an assessment of key risks to successful delivery, including any technical, personnel, stakeholder, timetable and commercial risks, and provide details of risk mitigation and redress including in the event that outputs do not meet the specification. Ensure you include reference to risk mitigation and management of Covid-19 disruption.

Evaluation criteria for E06:

Higher marks will be awarded to those who:

- Demonstrate strong project management skills and outline a planned management strategy and how it will be implemented to deliver the project on time, on budget and to a high quality. A simple, transparent management structure should be utilised, with named individuals, clear accountability and an appropriate escalation procedure
- A credible, but proportionate plan to keep the Authority informed of progress made and any difficulties encountered. Indicate the key contact to keep the Authority (Defra Project Officer) informed and the method of communication, including to alert them at the earliest opportunity of any difficulties encountered (e.g. milestone dates at risk).
- Present a robust, proportionate quality assurance plan for key deliverables, including input from relevant stakeholders.
- A risk register that demonstrates an understanding of the likely challenges and issues faced with suitable mitigation strategies and resilience for dealing with unexpected events.

Your response must be a maximum of three sides of A4, font size 11, with an additional one side of A4 for a Gantt chart. Please upload a document with the filename: 'E06_Your Company Name'.

The commercial evaluation will be based on a total price and bidders will be required to provide a full price breakdown of the work package, and matched against milestones in the commercial workbook

Stage	Section Reference	Evaluation Criteria	Question Weighting (%) Scoring/
Stage 1	Form of Tender	This stage is not scored but if you do not upload a complete, signed and dated Form of Tender in accordance with the instructions in Bravo, your Tender will be rejected as non-compliant.	Pass/Fail
Stage 2	Selection Stage:	<p>This stage is designed to select those Tenderers who are suitable to deliver the Authority's requirements and will be evaluated in accordance with the criteria set out in Sections 1 to 5 of the response form in Bravo and Part 1 of this Section 2 below (in respect of economic and financial standing and technical and professional ability).</p> <p>Failure to meet the stated selection criteria will result in a Response being rejected at this stage and no further assessment of the remainder of the Response (including the Tender) pursuant to the remaining stages below will be undertaken by the Authority.</p>	Pass/Fail

Stage 3	Technical & Professional Ability – Project Specific Requirements (Technical Questionnaire)	<p>This stage will be evaluated in accordance with the criteria set out in the Technical Questionnaire.</p> <p>Some requirements are mandatory and if you cannot provide them your Tender may be rejected.</p> <p>Scored as 70% weighting of the total available score, consisting of the following breakdown of questions:</p>	<p>Scored (see appendix C)</p> <p>E01 – Sustainability Weighting = Pass/Fail</p> <p>E02 – Equality and Diversity Weighting = Pass/ Fail</p> <p>E03 – Understanding of the Policy Context weighting= 10%</p> <p>E04 – Approach, Methodology and Outputs weighting: =50%</p> <p>E05 – Expertise and Experience weighting = 25%</p> <p>E06 – Project Management, Quality Assurance, Risk Management and Mitigation weighting: =15%</p>
Stage 4	Pricing Schedule	Prices will be evaluated in accordance with criteria set out in the Pricing Schedule on the ITT and Atamis.	Scored
Stage 5	Final score / Award	<p>A Response which passes stage 1 and 2 will proceed to evaluation of Tenders in accordance with stages 3 to 5.</p> <p>The final score is calculated as follows:</p> <p>Total Technical Quality Requirements will make up to a maximum of 70% of total score (Stage 3).</p> <p>Total Price Requirements will make up to a maximum of 30% of total score. (Stage 4)</p> <p>The most economically advantageous Tender will be the Tender with the highest final score.</p>	

- 1.1 Tenders will be evaluated on quality and price using the evaluation criteria set out in Bravo to determine which Tender is the most economically advantageous. The Authority will award the Contract to the Tenderer which submits the most economically advantageous tender which will be the highest scoring Tender after the weightings in clause 1.3 are applied.
- 1.2 Each question will be scored separately, and no reference will be made between the questions.
- 1.3 To ensure that the relative importance of both sets of criteria is correctly reflected in the overall score, a weighting system will be applied to the evaluation:
- the total technical quality scores awarded will form **70%** of the final score;
 - The score awarded for price will form **30%** of the final score.
- 1.4 Each scoring question in the quality evaluation is given a weighting to indicate the relative importance of that question in the overall quality score. Weightings for quality scores are provided with the evaluation criteria and are detailed on Bravo for each question in the response form. The evaluation criteria for price are set out in the Pricing Schedule.
- 1.5 Evaluation of Tenders will be undertaken by a panel appointed by the Authority. Each panel member will first undertake an independent evaluation of the Tenders applying the relevant evaluation criteria for each question. Then, a moderation meeting will be held at which the evaluation panel will reach a consensus on the marking of each question.
- 1.6 Questions asked by the Authority to evaluate submission's Technical Quality can be found on Bravo. These are repeated as Appendix C of this ITT for information purposes.
- 1.7 The method for scoring price can be found on Bravo.
- 1.8 The submissions against the Technical Quality questions **E03 – E06** will be evaluated using the following scoring criteria:
- For a score of 100: Excellent** - Response is completely relevant and excellent overall. The response is comprehensive, unambiguous and demonstrates a best-in-class thorough understanding of the requirement and provides details of how the requirement will be met in full.
- For a score of 70: Good** - Response is relevant and good. The response demonstrates a good understanding and provides details on how the requirements will be fulfilled.

For a score of 50: Acceptable - Response is relevant and acceptable. The response provides sufficient evidence to fulfil basic requirements.

For a score of 20: Poor - Response is partially relevant and/or poor. The response addresses some elements of the requirements but contains insufficient / limited detail or explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be fulfilled.

For a score of 0: Unacceptable - Nil or inadequate response. Fails to demonstrate an ability to meet the requirement.

If a Tenderer receives a 'Fail' in either question **E01 or E02** they will be eliminated from the procurement. If a score of twenty (20) or less is awarded to a Tenderer's response to any scored question **E03-E06** the Authority may choose to reject the Tender.

The commercial evaluation will be based on a total price and bidders will be required to provide a full price breakdown of the work package, and matched against milestones in the commercial workbook

Tenderers must provide a financial proposal, including rates and hours for each participating team member and costing analysed by work stages. The project is for a fixed cost. A breakdown of costs against each objective and against each key personnel including a detailed breakdown for equipment, consumables; overheads and travel costs are required. The Authority is keen to receive competitive Day Rates which must be set out in the "Commercial Workbook" (provided in the ITT pack); "Staff Costs" worksheet and ensure the details entered in the "Milestone" worksheet are that of the deliverables detailed in the specification.

The above is required to be uploaded to the 'Commercial Envelope' of Bravo.

Where subcontractors or joint contractors are used, a separate breakdown for each should be provided in addition to the overall project costs.

Day rates for all staff should be provided along with a general description of duties.

Tenderers will be required to submit a total fixed cost for completion of the project and include a breakdown of costs against each objective and against key personnel. Costs will need to be reasonable and competitive and offer value for money.

Commercial Evaluation

The calculation used is the following:

Score = Lowest Tender Price x 30% Maximum available marks

Tender Price

For example, if three Tender Responses are received and Tenderer A has quoted £30,000 as their total price, Tenderer B has quoted £50,000 and Tenderer C has quoted £60,000 then the calculation will be as follows:

Tenderer A Score = $\text{£}30,000/\text{£}30,000 \times 30$ (Maximum available marks) = 20%

Tenderer B Score = $\text{£}30,000/\text{£}50,000 \times 30$ (Maximum available marks) = 18%

Tenderer C Score = $\text{£}30,000/\text{£}60,000 \times 30$ (Maximum available marks) = 15%

Commercial Pricing Breakdown applicable to this ITT is on Bravo. This should be downloaded; completed and attached to the commercial envelope.

Section 5: Governance and Contract Management

1. The quality of the service provided will be regularly monitored by the Authority against the elements outlined in Section 5 and Section 6 below.
2. An official within Defra will act as the Project Officer responsible for the day-to-day management of the contract. The Supplier will appoint a Project Manager who will act as the principal point of contact for Defra. Tenderers may propose consortium or subcontracting arrangements but should provide a single manager responsible to Defra for fulfilment of the contract and for liaison with Defra's contact person.
3. The Supplier will be required to provide the Project Officer at Defra with regular progress updates. The form of these updates will be agreed in the inception meeting but is likely to involve weekly project management telephone meetings initially, changing to every month when project is well-established. The Supplier will also agree to make all reasonable efforts to meet with Defra officials as and when required.
4. Following completion of a deliverable a 'Post-Assignment Feedback' review will be undertaken with key members of the programme team to discuss what was achieved, what went well and any opportunities for improvement on future assignments.
5. The Supplier shall meet the agreed deadlines for delivery of the project deliverables and will notify the Authority without delay if there is a risk that they may be unable to meet this deadline. Tenderers should provide an assessment of risks and countermeasures in a risk management plan as part of their submission.

Efficiencies and Continuous Improvement in Service Lifetime

During the Contract, the Contractor shall look to develop, maintain, and improve efficiency, quality and where possible provide a reduction in charges to enhance the overall delivery of the Contract.

The Contractor shall have an ongoing obligation throughout the Contract to identify new and potential improvements to the Services which shall include, but are not limited to:

- New or potential improvement which enhances the quality, responsiveness, procedures, methods and/or customer support services; and
- Changes in business processes and ways of working that would enable the Services to be delivered at lower costs and /or at greater benefits to the Authority.

Performance Management

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are essential in order to align supplier performance with the requirements of the Authority and to do so in a fair and practical way. KPIs have to be realistic and achievable; they also have to be met otherwise indicating that the service is failing to deliver.

The Contract shall be managed in accordance with the Authority's Terms and Conditions and KPIs under the Performance Management Framework.

The proposed KPIs are set out in Section 6 and Section 7.

Section 6: Performance Management Framework

1. Overview of the PMF

- 1.1. As part of the Authority's continuous drive to improve the performance of all Contractors, this PMF will be used to monitor, measure and control all aspects of the Supplier's performance of contract responsibilities.
- 1.2. The PMF purpose is to set out the obligations on the successful Contractor, to outline how the successful Contractor's performance will be monitored, evaluated and rectified for performance.
- 1.3. The Authority may define any reasonable performance management indicators for the Contractor under the following categories:
 - Contract Management
 - Delivery and Support
 - Quality of Service
- 1.4. The above categories are consistent with all Contract awards allowing the Authority to monitor Contractor's performance at both individual level and at the enterprise level with the individual Contractor.

2. Management of the PMF

- 2.1. Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) shall be monitored on a regular basis and shall form part of the contract performance review. Performance of KPI's will be reported by the Contractor to the Authority on monthly basis. The Contractor shall detail performance against KPI's in Monthly Reports and at quarterly Contract Meetings with the Authority, who will review this and make comments if any.
- 2.2. The Contractor shall maintain their own management reports, including a Risk and Issues Log and present these as requested by the Authority at any meeting requested by the Authority.
- 2.3. Any performance issues highlighted in these reports will be addressed by the Contractor, who shall be required to provide an improvement plan ("Remediation Plan") to address all issues highlighted within a week of the Authority request.
- 2.4. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are essential in order to align Contractor's performance with the requirements of the Authority and to do so in a fair and practical way. KPIs must be realistic and achievable; they also have to be met otherwise indicating that the service is failing to deliver. The successful Contractor will ensure that failure and non-performance is quickly rectified.
- 2.5. The Authority reserves the right to amend the existing KPI's detailed in Section 5 or add any new KPI's. Any changes to the KPI's shall be confirmed by way of a Contract Change Note.

Section 7: Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)

KPI	What is required to make this measurable	KPI Measurement	KPI Rating		
KPI 1 – Project Deadlines	Deliverables will be presented by the Contractor(s) to the Authority at the agreed date and quality as outlined in the deliverables.	Quality deliverables are presented to the Authority on the day and or time (if appropriate) that has been agreed by both parties. The Authority's project officer deems the deliverable to be of sufficient quality.	Deliverables sent to the Authority greater than 5 (five) working days after the agreed deadline.	Deliverables sent to the Authority greater than 1 (one) working day after the agreed deadline, or less than one day but later than the agreed time if a restricted timescale.	Meets expectations - All deliverables sent to the Authority on time
KPI 2 – Invoices	Invoices to be received within three (3) working days of the end of each deadline.	Invoices quote the correct PO, Contract number, the Authority Contact, and qualitative description of the work being done.	Invoices received by the Authority which contains inaccuracies and/or greater than 10 (ten)	Invoices received by the Authority greater than 5 (five) working days after the end of the month,	Meets expectations - All invoices received by the Authority on time and accurately reflect agreed work

	Invoices and associated deliverables should be clearly linked. Evidence is required of the deliverable.	Invoices must be clearly itemised: specific milestones and deliverables should be explicitly listed.	working days after the agreed deadline.	and/or contains some inaccuracies.	
	Note partial payment for milestones is not permissible: only completed milestones and deliverables are chargeable.	Associated reports should be clearly and explicitly linked to invoices to help financial tracking.			
KPI 3 – Quality of Deliverable: Error Free and QA	Deliverables are accurate and free of errors and have been internally QA before submission to Defra. Submitted reports show that the research undertaken has been rigorous, relevant and meets the Objectives set out in the Specification of Requirements	Deliverables reviewed by the Authority for accuracy. Defra will assess the quality and completeness of the reports against the Objectives set out in the Specification of Requirements	Reports are of a poor quality and/or a significant error is identified that results in published documents or National Statistics being amended by Defra. Or an error is identified that results in Government incurring financial damages or significant reputational harm.	Reports are of a reasonable quality and/or an error is identified that does not result in published documents or National Statistics being amended	Meets expectations – No errors within deliverables, reports of a high quality

KPI 4 – Check point risk Assessment	High quality, detailed and up to date project risk assessments in place.	Initial submission 1 month from commencement and kept up to date throughout the project. Evidence should be provided that risks are proactively managed.	Risk Assessment is not kept up to date and known risks are not communicated on the Risk Assessment	Risk Assessment is kept up to date but communication on the Risk Assessment is incomplete	Risk assessment is kept up to date and remains appropriate for use
KPI 5 – Monthly activity check-in with Authority	Contractor will give Authority monthly updates on project progression, any foreseen blockages or issues	Contractor will contact Authority at least monthly (email/phone/videocall) with relevant updates	Contractor goes more than 3 months without contacting Authority with relevant updates, OR without stating known future potential issues	Contractor goes more than 2 months without contacting Authority	Contractor contacts Authority at least monthly, stating project activities and any future potential issues

Section 8: ITT Glossary and Appendices

Definitions

Unless the context otherwise requires, the following words and expressions used within the Bidder Pack (except for Section 3: Terms and Conditions of Contract) shall have the following meanings to be interpreted in the singular or plural as the context requires.

TERM	MEANING
“Authority”	The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
“Bidder Pack”	this invitation to tender and all related documents published by the Authority and made available to Tenderers.
“Contract”	the contract (set out in Appendix B) to be entered into by the Authority and the successful Tenderer.
“EIR”	the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (as amended) together with any guidance and/or codes of practice issued by the Information Commissioner or any Government Department in relation to those Regulations.
“eSourcing system”	eSourcing system is the eSourcing system used by the Authority for conducting this procurement, which can be found at https://defra-family.force.com/s/Welcome
“FOIA”	the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (as amended) and any subordinate legislation made under that Act together with any guidance and/or codes of practice issued by the Information Commissioner or any Government Department in relation to that legislation.
“Form of Tender”	means the form contained in Appendix 2 to the Procurement Specific section of the Bidder Pack which must be signed, scanned and uploaded into the Authority’s eSourcing System by the Tenderer to indicate that it understands the Tender and accepts the various terms and conditions and other requirements of participating in the exercise.

“Information”	means the information contained in the Bidder Pack or sent with it, and any information which has been made available to the Tenderer by the Authority, its employees, agents or advisers in connection with the procurement.
“Involved Person”	means any person who is either working for, or acting on behalf of, the Authority in connection with this procurement and/or the Contract including, without limitation, any officer, employee, advisor, agent, member, partner or consultant”.
“Pricing Schedule”	the form accessed via eSourcing system in which Tenderers are required to submit their pricing information as part of a Tender.
“Regulations”	the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
“Relevant Body	means any other organisation, body or government department that is working with or acting on behalf of the Authority in connection with this procurement and/or the Contract including, without limitation, its officers, employees, advisors, agents, members, partners or consultants.
“Response”	means the information submitted in response to the Bidder Pack via the online response forms on eSourcing system including the Tenderer’s formal Tender.
“Specification Requirements”	of the Authority’s requirements set out in Section 2 of the Bidder Pack Procurement Specific Requirements.
“Tender”	the formal offer to provide the goods or services described in section 1.1 of part 1 of the Bidder Pack and comprising the responses to the questions in eSourcing system and the Pricing Schedule.
“Tenderer”	anyone responding to the Bidder Pack and, where the context requires, includes a potential tenderer.
“Timetable”	the procurement timetable set out in Section 1 of the Bidder Pack Procurement Specific Requirements.

Appendix A

FORM OF TENDER

To be returned by 12:00pm (GMT time) on **04th January 2022**.

Elizabeth James
Procurement Advisor
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Procurement and Commercial Function

TENDER FOR THE: Harmonisation and Standardisation in the Field of Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) Analysis for Food Authenticity Testing

ITT C5263

1. We have examined the invitation to tender and its schedules set out below (the **ITT**) and do hereby offer to provide the goods and/or services specified in the ITT and in accordance with the attached documents to the Authority commencing date **08/02/2023** for the period specified in the ITT.
 - Tender Particulars (Section 1)
 - Specification of Requirements (Section 2)
 - Form of Tender (Appendix A)
 - Authority's Conditions of Contract (Appendix B)
2. If this tender is accepted, we will execute the Contract and any other documents required by the Authority within 10 days of being asked to do so.
3. We agree that:
 - a. before executing the Contract substantially in the form set out in the ITT, the formal acceptance of this tender in writing by this Authority or such parts as may be specified, together with the documents attached shall comprise a binding contract between the Authority and us;
 - b. pursuant to EU Directive 1999/93/EC (Community Framework for Electronic Signatures) and the Electronic Communications Act 2000, the Contract may be executed electronically using the Authority's electronic tendering and contract management system, Bravo;
 - c. we are legally bound to comply with the confidentiality provisions set out in the ITT;
 - d. any other terms or conditions or any general reservation which may be provided in any correspondence sent by the Authority in connection with this procurement shall not form part of this tender without the prior written consent of the Authority;

- e. this tender shall remain valid for 120 days from the closing date for tenders specified in the ITT; and
- f. the Authority may disclose our information and documents (submitted to the Authority during the procurement) more widely within Government for the purpose of ensuring effective cross-Government procurement processes, including value for money and related purposes.

4. We confirm that:

- a. there are no circumstances affecting our organisation which could give rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest that would affect the integrity of the Authority's decision making in relation to the award of the Contract; or
- b. if there are or may be such circumstances giving rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest, we have disclosed this in full to the Authority.

5. We undertake and it shall be a condition of the Contract that:

- a. the amount of our tender has not been calculated by agreement or arrangement with any person other than the Authority and that the amount of our tender has not been communicated to any person until after the closing date for the submission of tenders and in any event not without the consent of the Authority;
- b. we have not canvassed and will not, before the evaluation process, canvass or solicit any member or officer, employee or agent of the Authority or other contracting authority in connection with the award of the Contract and that no person employed by us has done or will do any such act; and
- c. made arrangements with any other party about whether or not they may submit a tender except for the purposes of forming a joint venture.

6. I warrant that I am authorised to sign this tender and confirm that we have complied with all the requirements of the ITT.

Signed

Date

In the capacity of

**Authorised to sign
Tender for and on**

behalf of

Postal Address

Post Code

Telephone No.

Email Address

Appendix B

AUTHORITY'S R&D TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Appendix C

TECHNICAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

In line with DEFRA policy, we will be awarding a contract to the Most Economically Advantageous ITT response (MEAT).

The overall score is broken down as follows: 70% of the overall score will be awarded for technical criteria and 30% of the overall score will be awarded for commercial.

Please note responses will be assessed against demonstration of understanding of the Specification as outlined in section 2 of the ITT Document.

The technical evaluation criteria that will be used to assess responses are set out in the table below. The Technical criteria is weighted according to its significance to the project, and this will be applied using the following scoring methodology:

E01 Sustainability (Weighting - Pass/Fail)

The Authority has set itself challenging commitments and targets to improve the environmental and social impacts of its estate management, operation and procurement. These support the Government's green commitments. The policies are included in the Authority's sustainable procurement policy statement published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defra-s-sustainable-procurement-policy-statement>

Within this context, please explain your approach to delivering the services and how you intend to reduce negative sustainability impacts. Please discuss the methods that you will employ to demonstrate and monitor the effectiveness of your organisation's approach.

Evaluation Criteria:

Your response must:

- Demonstrate that there is a sustainable policy in-place.
- Provide evidence how you will reduce the environmental impacts of delivering this contract that may include the following;
- Using innovative sustainable tools, techniques and technologies
- The procedures and systems in place for communicating what needs to be done to improve sustainability to those engaged on this contract;
- Explain how you measure sustainability performance and be able to report to the Authority on progress if required.

A Fail will be allocated to those responses that are not able to demonstrate any evidence of addressing sustainability.

Please upload your response with filename 'Your Company Name_E01'. Your response must be no more than 2 side of A4, minimum font size 10. Your Sustainability Policy will be accepted in addition to this limit.

E02 Equality and Diversity Policy (Weighting - Pass/Fail)

The Authority is committed to promoting equality and diversity within its operations and service delivery. Please describe your organisation's commitment to equality and diversity and how you ensure that compliance with relevant legislation is achieved and maintained. Please describe how you will promote equality and diversity in relation to the delivery of this Contract. Please also provide a copy of your equality and diversity policy or an equivalent document.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Includes a copy of the Tenderer's equality and diversity policy or an equivalent document which shows their organisation's commitment to equality and diversity and confirms their compliance with relevant legislation.
- Describes how the Tenderer will promote equality and diversity in relation to the delivery of this Contract.

A Fail will be allocated to those responses that are not able to demonstrate any evidence of addressing equality and diversity.

Please upload your response with filename 'Your Company Name_E02'. Your response must be no more than 2 side of A4, minimum font size 10. Your Equality and Diversity Policy will be accepted in addition to this limit.

E03 – Understanding of the Policy Context (Weighting: 10%)

Please set out your understanding of the policy/research context, how this will inform and shape this project and the project's relevance to Government goals. Outline your own understanding of the projects aims and objectives. Summarise your understanding of the current gaps in the research and the key issues/challenges that the project needs to address.

Evaluation criteria for E03

Higher marks will be awarded to those who demonstrate:

- a clear understanding of the policy and research context of the study and
- identification of key technical issues and analytical challenges that the project will address.

Your response must be a maximum of one side of A4, font size 11. Please upload a document with the filename: 'E03_Your Company Name'.

E04 – Approach, Methodology and Outputs (Weighting: 50%)

Please set out your approach/project design and provide a detailed methodology including how this will address the research question and meet the aims outlined in the specification, including relevance to policy and key literature.

Your response should include:

- Justification for the approach you plan to take and a detailed explanation of how your methodology will achieve the objectives and outputs as set out in the specification (innovation is encouraged).
- Demonstration that the proposed methodology is technically sound, realistic, and achievable in the time-frame.
- An outline of what will be delivered and when (broken down by objective and task) and indicate any interdependence of milestones (i.e. the extent to which the success of one objective depends on the successful completion of another). Your workplan should include adequate time for review of deliverables.
- Please include a list of deliverables, project outputs and dissemination/knowledge exchange plans. Consider the expected outputs which may arise from this project, identify key audiences for the results and outline your plans for knowledge exchange and communication of results to raise awareness/encourage adoption. Include a brief description of how you anticipate the results will be used and by whom.

Please use the aims and objectives as stated in the Specification of Requirement or explain why you propose to revise them. If your proposal will deliver additional objectives or includes optional additional work packages, please clarify these and separately cost any optional work packages.

The approaches and work plan will be included in the contract issued to the successful Tenderer, therefore please restrict your entry to the salient points and set these out clearly and concisely. Gantt charts/flow charts are welcomed as appropriate and can be included as appendices.

Evaluation criteria for E04

Higher marks will be awarded to those who present:

- A well-justified approach and a robust, detailed and credible methodology to meet or exceed the objectives set out in this specification, clearly using the evidence to underpin the development of project outputs.
- A realistic and deliverable work plan, with key milestone and deliverable dates. The programme format should be generic, commencing from award (Week 0) and should show each activity in the project itemised under each specific objective, with start and end times, timing of proposed progress meetings and scheduled dates for project deliverables. Please note that Defra pays for work on completion of deliverables/milestones, so delivery dates should be realistic and achievable. Please note pricing should not be included anywhere in the technical response and should be restricted to the commercial response.
- Knowledge exchange and dissemination plan which demonstrates good knowledge of relevant stakeholders and provides confidence that relevant stakeholders will be aware of project outputs, understand their limitations and use them.

Your response must be a maximum of 5 sides of A4 (including figures and charts), font size 11. Please upload document with filename: 'E04 *Your Company Name*'

E05 – Expertise and Experience (Weighting: 25%)

Please provide details of the proposed project team outlining their respective roles, responsibilities, expertise and experience.

Your response should include:

- Detail of the project team structure, including an organogram, identifying Key Personnel.
- Demonstration that key individuals have relevant expertise, research credentials and experience to undertake the proposed project and deliver a successful outcome. If using a consortia or sub-contracting approach, please include information on all partners/sub-contractors, justification for their inclusion, and the skills and experience members will bring to the project team.
- Your track record in managing and successfully completing similar projects of the type proposed in the specification of requirements.
- Please provide a Resourcing Table breakdown (example shown below) showing the allocation of time across different components of the project by all key individual members of the proposed team (can be included as an appendix). Tenderers should ensure that the detail corresponds with the commercial submission for staff costs
- You may include a short CV for key individuals of the proposed team, outlining their expertise in relation to the project (maximum 2 pages per person, included in the annex). Include any skills team members have which will be applicable and utilised during the project.

Evaluation criteria for E05:

Higher marks will be awarded to those who:

- Explain how your project teams' scientific expertise, capability and experience will deliver the objectives presented in the specification and the methodological approach you have outlined.
- Provide the breadth and depth of relevant skills, knowledge and experience of team members and any other sub-contractors/consortia organisations, and how these are relevant to meeting project requirements.
- Demonstrate previous success of team members in delivering relevant comparable projects, including managing and completion of projects, delivering to timescales/budgets, working with stakeholders and policy makers.
- Demonstrate the size and structure of the proposed project team is sufficient to ensure that adequate resources have been allocated for all of the required roles and responsibilities with a clear demonstration of the time input from key individuals.

Your response must be a maximum of 5 sides of A4 (excluding CV's which may be added as further attachments for Key Personnel), font size 11. Please upload document with filename: 'E05 *Your Company Name*'

Resourcing Tables

	Name					Total days	
Days	Grade					For task	For objective
Objective 1 xxxx							
	Task 1.1						
	Task 1.2						
Objective 2 xxxx							
	Task 2.1						
	Task 2.2						
	Task 2.2						
etc							
Total days for team members							

Across whole project - days by staff grade	
Grade x	
Grade y	
Grade x	
Total	

E06 – Project Management, Quality Assurance, Risk Management and Mitigation (weighting: 15%)

Please provide details of the proposed project management arrangements, including draft timelines and communication with Defra.

Please identify the individual(s) who will have overall responsibility for the contract and a representative available for day-to-day contact with Defra's contract manager. If relevant, include details of any subcontracting arrangements and how this will be managed.

Please provide details of how you intend to quality assure work undertaken as part of this contract and outputs so that deliverables are provided efficiently, to a high standard and on time. Please identify the key risks associated with this contract and provide details of risk mitigation.

Your response must include the below.

- Demonstrate a robust approach to project management with a description of how this will be implemented, including in relation to change management, issues escalation and quality control. Include how the team will be managed, particularly if managing a multidisciplinary team or a consortium

- Provide details of the strategies, policies or systems you will use to ensure the delivery of the project meets quality requirements, including work delivered by sub-contractors or through consortium arrangements.
- Provide a 'risk register' with an assessment of key risks to successful delivery, including any technical, personnel, stakeholder, timetable and commercial risks, and provide details of risk mitigation and redress including in the event that outputs do not meet the specification. Ensure you include reference to risk mitigation and management of Covid-19 disruption.

Evaluation criteria for E06:

Higher marks will be awarded to those who:

- Demonstrate strong project management skills and outline a planned management strategy and how it will be implemented to deliver the project on time, on budget and to a high quality. A simple, transparent management structure should be utilised, with named individuals, clear accountability and an appropriate escalation procedure
- A credible, but proportionate plan to keep the Authority informed of progress made and any difficulties encountered. Indicate the key contact to keep the Authority (Defra Project Officer) informed and the method of communication, including to alert them at the earliest opportunity of any difficulties encountered (e.g. milestone dates at risk).
- Present a robust, proportionate quality assurance plan for key deliverables, including input from relevant stakeholders.
- A risk register that demonstrates an understanding of the likely challenges and issues faced with suitable mitigation strategies and resilience for dealing with unexpected events.

Your response must be a maximum of three sides of A4, font size 11, with an additional one side of A4 for a Gantt chart. Please upload a document with the filename: 'E06_Your Company Name'.

Appendix D

Commercially Sensitive Information (Attached)

Please re-produce and upload as an attachment on Atamis if applicable

TENDERER'S COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE INFORMATION	POTENTIAL IMPLICATION OF DISCLOSURE	DURATION COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE INFORMATION	OF

Appendix E

PRICING SCHEDULE

For Completion (Available on Atamis. Please upload to Atamis)

Appendix F

STAFF TIME IN DAYS TEMPLATE

For Completion (Available on Atamis. Please upload to Atamis)