

Census Transformation Programme

Notice of further market engagement activity and call for expressions of interest to attend forthcoming supplier meetings

Introduction

The Office for National Statistics (the "**Authority**") is continuing to develop plans for future procurement activities associated with the planning and delivery of the 2021 Census (the "**Census**") for England and Wales.

The Census is part of a wider programme of activities that comprise the Census Transformation Programme (the "**Programme**"). Further information on the Authority and the Programme can be found on our website: www.ons.gov.uk

As a part of the development of the procurement strategy for delivery of the Programme, the Authority is undertaking a comprehensive market engagement exercise (the "**Exercise**") aimed at assisting the Authority to better understand the supplier marketplace.

As was notified to suppliers when the Exercise was launched, the Exercise is being undertaken in two parts:

Part 1: General

The activities associated with Part 1 took place during spring and summer 2015, and consisted of:

- A supplier briefing (the "**Briefing**") that was delivered by the Authority to all interested supplier organisations in May 2015. The Briefing was attended by 300 people representing 190 organisations.
- A supplier survey (the "**Survey**") that the Authority undertook in order to gauge the levels of general market appetite amongst suppliers wanting to assist the Authority with delivery of the Programme. The Survey resulted in engagement with over 500 organisations, with some 300 returning completed forms.

In November 2015, the Authority published a final report on the key findings arising from the Part 1 activities, which included a list of all organisations that participated in Part 1. Copies of both the final report and all information shared with suppliers during Part 1 can be downloaded from the Authority's electronic tendering portal (the "**Portal**"), on the following link: <https://in-tendhost.co.uk/ons/asp/BuyerProfiles>

Part 2: Specific

Part 2 commenced in February 2016 with a series of further supplier briefings that were held to update suppliers both on the feedback that the Authority had obtained during Part 1, and the emerging procurement plans for the Programme. All information shared with suppliers during Part 2 can also be downloaded from the Portal, on the link above.

To date, the information obtained from suppliers by the Authority has been used to help inform specific category procurement plans.

The Authority is now developing detailed plans for sourcing the products and services required by the Programme, and are continuing Part 2 of the Exercise by engaging further with suppliers in developing its requirements to procure a partner to deliver and support the Paper Questionnaire Return Service (the “**Service**”) required for the 2021 Census. We are keen to understand how our requirements/contract can be structured to align closely to the market.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives for the next steps in this Part of the Exercise are to:

1. update all interested suppliers on the future Programme needs;
2. highlight the importance and significance of the Census and the Service;
3. engage with suppliers to assess interest and capability as well as to discuss the possible options and approaches for delivering the Service requirements, to include but not limited to:
 - the market appetite and capability to deliver the Service;
 - how the Services should be delivered and maintained; and
 - maximising the potential for innovation.
4. understand the perceived risks in the marketplace.

The next steps in this Part of the Exercise will comprise of one-to-one meetings with interested suppliers (the “**Supplier Meetings**”) for the provision of the Service throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland during October 2017. Details of the proposed Supplier Meetings, and how suppliers express an interest in taking part in the Supplier Meetings, are provided below.

Publication of further information

The Authority has published the Operations Overview document, which gives suppliers the latest understanding that the Authority has on the future procurement needs for the Programme. The Operations Overview document includes information about:

- the Programme’s service model, and those parts of the service model that it is presently envisaged will be delivered using either the Authority’s in-house capability, or via out-sourced (procured) means;
- an estimate of the order of magnitude of the Authority’s requirements for each part of the service model for the planned rehearsal in 2019, and the Census; and
- where the Authority proposes to utilise the services of one or more government framework agreements to source those elements of the Programme that will be procured.

The Authority has also published an update to the Supplier Information Document (September 2016).

Both of these documents are available for download (as PDF-format files) on the Portal and can be accessible freely by any interested organisation.

Service Scope

The Authority are currently considering the options for the procurement of a service to collect and receipt up to 16 million individually completed paper questionnaires from respondents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; and delivering them to the UK data capture facilities. This service will support the 2021 Census (and scaled down proportionally for the 2019 Rehearsal).

The solution is to ensure that all completed paper questionnaires are returned to the UK data capture facilities. This shall include coverage throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland and shall be accessible and convenient for all respondents. The Service shall include the collection, sorting, receipting and delivery of up to 16 million individually completed paper questionnaires by respondents to the UK data capture facilities; and provide management information to the Authority as necessary, to assist with the delivery of the 2019 Rehearsal and 2021 Census.

The Services comprise an integrated solution for:

- the collection of up to 16 million individually completed paper questionnaires by respondents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland;
- the receipting of all collected paper questionnaires; and
- the delivery of all collected paper questionnaires to UK data capture facilities.

Supplier Meetings

The Authority is keen to meet with suppliers that will be interested in tendering to deliver the Service. The Authority wishes to understand the depth of knowledge, expertise and practical experience which suppliers may have of the management and/or delivery of all of the services in the areas listed above.

The Authority therefore proposes to make representatives of the Programme available in order to host in-person meetings with interested supplier organisations during October 2017.

How to register

Registration to partake in the Supplier Meetings must be made by email **by no later than 5:00 pm BST on Friday 13 October 2017** (the “Deadline”) to the Authority at the following email address:

census2021.transformation.programme@ons.gov.uk

Further notes on registration for and format of the Supplier Meetings

All emails expressing an interest in attending one of the Supplier Meetings on the Specific Packages must be received by the Authority at the email address above and by the Deadline. Emails received by the Authority after the Deadline may not be considered by the Authority.

Supplier Meetings will be undertaken on a one-on-one basis via face-to-face meetings, video conference or conference calls to suit availability.

Attendance by suppliers at the Supplier Meetings will be limited to two individual persons per supplier. Each Supplier Meeting will last no longer than 120 minutes.

In the event that the Authority receives a larger number of requests to attend the Supplier Meetings than can be accommodated by the Authority, we reserve the right to decide which suppliers the Authority considers most-suited to deliver all of the scope described above.

Additional Information

The purpose of this notice is to notify supplier organisations of the further planned activities of the Exercise, and the notice does not indicate or confirm any future or forthcoming procurement exercise, activity or of any individual procurement action.

Any information provided by the Authority to supplier organisations during the market engagement will be shared with all supplier organisations.

Any confidential or commercially sensitive information provided by supplier organisations will be treated accordingly and not shared.

The Exercise is NOT a pre-qualification or selection exercise and is NOT part of any pre-qualification or selection process that may apply to any future potential procurement. The Exercise is intended to act as an awareness and information gathering exercise offering an opportunity for suppliers to advise the extent to which they potentially are able to provide some or all of the services that the Authority may require, in order to help the Authority with its future commissioning intentions.

An expression of interest in attending a Supplier Meeting is no indication of a commitment to participate in any tender or procurement process, and as such it does not infer any preferential or special status on those organisations who do submit an interest.

Supplier organisations must ultimately satisfy the minimum requirements of any future procurement documents in order to be considered in any procurement exercise.