



Attachment 12

CCS Frequently asked questions

RM6118 – Payments Acceptance

Number	Question	Answer
1	Could CCS please confirm that clarifications will form part of the signed contract?	The clarification log does not form part of the Framework Contract. The final clarification log will remain in the eSourcing Suite and available to all bidders to download at the end of the clarification period.
2	Will CCS be managing the agreement?	This agreement will be managed by CCS and any Call-Off Contract awarded under this Agreement will be managed by individual Contracting Authorities via the Call Off process.
3	Would it be possible to request an extension to the deadline for suppliers to submit their clarification questions?	We can confirm that CCS is unable to grant your request for an extension.
4	Can you advise which attachments we need to complete and upload as part of our tender?	Please refer to attachment 1 About the Framework for full details of all the associated attachments.
5	Is there an option to upload additional information, attachments or diagrams or clarification wording around our specific responses?	As per Attachment 2 How to Bid, paragraph 1.4 'Upload ONLY those attachments we have asked for. Do not upload any attachments we haven't asked for.' Any additional documents submitted will not be taken into consideration for the purposes of evaluation.

6	Can you clarify the difference between bidding as a consortium member vs. bidding as a key subcontractor?	Please refer to Attachment 1 About the Framework, paragraph 4 Who Can Bid.
7	How will SMEs be considered in quality evaluation in comparison with larger suppliers?	The principles of procurement law are based around transparency, openness, competition and equality of treatment, so all suppliers, irrespective of size, are treated equally.
8	Key Subcontractors are referred to in the documentation. They will not be submitting individual responses, but will need access to the documents to be able to make an informed decision on how they may be able to participate. Can CCS provide a single document containing the information that can be shared with key subcontractors?	All tender documentation is accessible on the CCS website and Contracts Finder, in addition to the eSourcing suite. If a Bidder determines that they may need a subcontractor to carry out any obligations under the Framework, it is up to the Bidder to decide which obligations it wishes a key subcontractor to fulfil and provide the relevant information.
9	We have numerous sub-contractors that we use for various services, therefore it is difficult to give definite details of which ones we will use for the contract. Would it be acceptable to give examples of key sub-contractors that we would use? Should we be successful we would disclose any key sub-contractor for specific contracts before any work starts.	We require bidders to disclose those key sub-contractors who directly contribute to their ability to meet their obligations under the Framework Agreement. Please refer to section 4 'Who can bid' of Attachment 1 About the Framework for further information.
10	We have been asked by another company, who we work with on other projects, whether we can be named as a key sub-contractor in their bid, as well as bidding for a place in our own right.	Please refer to Attachment 1 About the Framework, paragraph 4 Who Can Bid.
11	Is there a time frame within which any certifications must be obtained if a supplier is not already accredited?	Please refer to the selection questionnaire in Attachment 2a Selection questionnaire. This will detail the specific requirements you and your key subcontractors must be in upon award of the contract. This may mean you will need to be able to demonstrate your organisation meets the technical security requirements prior to the framework commencement date or the first call-off contract.
12	What is the management fee?	We can confirm that the Management Charge is as set out in the Framework Award Form.
13	Can non UK registered companies supply under the framework? I.e. companies outside the EEA? Companies inside the EEA? Companies registered in British Crown Dependencies?	If your company is a non UK registered company, you must be able to supply the deliverables as stated in Framework Schedule 1 Specification including having UK office/branch locations. Please note: in accordance with GDPR, all personal data must be held within the EU. The agreement is only able to be used by UK based customers.
14	Will the Call Off Agreement govern the supply of Services for both the Authority and the Contracting Authorities?	Crown Commercial Service confirms that the Framework Agreement is an agreement between the us and the Supplier, the Call Off Agreement is an agreement between us and/or Buyers and the Supplier. Each Call-Off Agreement will be a separate agreement.
15	How many characters are we allowed to provide a response to the Award Questions?	Each response box within the eSourcing Suite has a maximum character count of 2000, where applicable we have added continuation boxes for each question in the Award Questionnaire.

16	Within each Questionnaire, the ability to submit answers without full completion seems to be unavailable presently. Is there a possibility this functionality could be available?	Any questions that are marked with an asterisk are mandatory questions and the eSourcing suite will require a response to these questions before it will allow you to submit your bid.
17	I have expressed an interest however I wish to remove our interest in this framework. How do I do this?	When you enter the My Response page you will be given 2 options, Create Response and Decline Response, to remove your interest you should select Decline Response.
18	Please would the CCS confirm that bidders are at liberty to engage the services of a third party / agent / bid management company in the preparation and submission of their bid if they wish to do so.	<p>The decision to use a third party / agent / bid management company in the preparation of a bid is at the discretion of each bidder. Please note that bidders should have full visibility of the content of their bid including pricing, and must have had full visibility of the bid pack for this competition, including the terms and conditions, prior to the submission of their bid.</p> <p>Please refer to the selection questionnaire as detailed in the eSourcing event and Attachment 2a - Selection Questionnaire.</p>
19	Do we need to complete Information and Declaration Workbook.	As per Attachment 1 About the Framework, if you are relying upon any other organisation, including key subcontractors or consortium members, to meet the selection criteria, you must get each of the organisations to populate this attachment. You must then attach each of the populated attachments to the relevant selection questions in the eSourcing Suite (qualification envelope).
20	<p>Financial Assessment Template. We can see no option to upload this document within the ITT Response System.</p> <p>Please could you confirm where this document should be uploaded as part of this ITT?</p>	<p>As stated in Attachment 1 About the Framework, Bidders are not required to complete the Financial Assessment Template as part of their bid.</p> <p>This attachment is for information only and will be used by CCS to assess your level of financial risk.</p>
21	What is an ESPD	<p>A European Single Procurement Document (ESPD) is a self-declaration of the businesses' financial status, abilities and suitability for a public procurement procedure.</p> <p>We can confirm that the EU ESPD (European Single Procurement Document) section at question 1.2 of the Selection questionnaire is not dependent on how you intend to bid (e.g. as a sole supplier and not as a consortium).</p> <p>Any bidder who already has an ESPD can submit Parts II and III of their ESPD to us rather than answering the questions in Part 2 and Part 3 of the Selection questionnaire. If you are submitting an ESPD you must still complete specified Parts which will be detailed in the Selection questionnaire and the declaration in the eSourcing suite qualification envelope.</p> <p>If a bidder does not already have an ESPD, the bidder should answer all questions detailed in the Selection questionnaire.</p>
21	Immediate parent company and Ultimate parent company details, as the main body of our organisation is not a UK based company and therefore do not have a UK registration number, DUNS number and VAT number. Do you require just the registered company name and	<p>If your immediate parent company and/or ultimate parent company are not a UK based company, we still require the registered name and office address of the company.</p> <p>Additionally, in the fields that you are unable to populate (e.g. registration number, DUNS number and VAT number) please insert text to explain that the parent company is not UK based.</p>

	Head Office address?	
22	I have been told by my IT department that we do not have one of these certificates. I have been told that we have an ISO 27001 which is more superior than a Cyber Essentials Certificate. Would we still have to have one of these to bid on the Framework or would you accept an ISO 27001?	<p>To be compliant in this competition you must be able to select one of the yes options within part 8 of the Selection Questionnaire for the Cyber Essentials Scheme. Please note that option (iii) of the question (Cyber Essentials Scheme) in the Selection questionnaire states:</p> <p>"You do not need to have a current and valid Cyber Essentials certificate if you can demonstrate (or, will be able to demonstrate) by the framework commencement date that your organisation meets the technical requirements prescribed by the Cyber Essentials Scheme as detailed in the following link: https://www.cyberstreetwise.com/cyberessentials/files/requirements".</p> <p>Both ISO 27001 and Cyber Essentials aim for information protection, but while ISO 27001 considers information regardless of where it is found (e.g., paper, information systems, digital media, etc.), Cyber Essentials focuses on protection of data and programs on networks, computers, servers, and other elements of an IT infrastructure.</p>
23	Can you please confirm what you mean by "prominent place on your organisation's website homepage"? Many firms provide a link to their slavery statement at the bottom of their homepage. Could you please confirm whether this would be compliant?	CCS confirms this will be sufficient.
24	In relation to sub-contractors, please could you clarify whether Cyber Essentials is sufficient for them or whether CCS require sub-contractors to have Cyber Essentials Plus?	As per the requirements in Part 8 of the selection questionnaire key-subcontractors are required to have a cyber essentials plus certificate.
25	Do we need to carry out assessments on our guarantor?	We can confirm as per attachment 2 a Selection Questionnaire Part 5 Financial Risk, we will use a credit reference agency to get a financial risk score for you and any members of your consortium or any nominated guarantor(s) therefore you are not required to carry out any financial risk assessments on a guarantor
26	What do you consider to be a key sub-contractor?	<p>The definition of a Key Sub-Contractor is 'which, in the opinion of the Cabinet Office, performs (or would perform if appointed) a critical role in the provision of all or any part of the Services'.</p> <p>Please refer to Attachment 1 About the Framework, paragraph 4 Who Can Bid.</p>
27	Can we clarify what you are looking for in terms of response to Question 1.16.4 of Attachment 2a – Selection questionnaire as we are not sure as to what organisation you require us to be registered to for the purposes of this agreement.	We do not require you to be registered with any organisation for the purposes of this procurement. If you are not registered with any professional or trade registers, please select 'No' from the option list provided in the eSourcing suite.
28	Please can you advise what directive you are referring to in question 1.14.10 within Attachment 2a – Selection questionnaire?	We can confirm the directive referred to in question 1.14.10 of the Selection questionnaire is the Public Contracts Directive.

29	What is meant by professional or trade registers?	The Professional or Trade Registers question of the Selection questionnaire is for information only, for CCS to determine whether you are a member of any Trade body or association which is relevant to this competition.
30	In Attachment 2a – Selection questionnaire you state that CHECK compliant and CESG Penetration Testing will be undertaken prior to 'Go Live'. Please can you confirm your definition of 'Go Live' as our own systems are already live?	Go Live refers to the Framework Contract start date and the Selection questionnaire requires your confirmation that you agree to undertake CHECK compliant CESG Penetration Testing, with a CESG approved provider, prior to 'Go Live' and annually thereafter.
31	You state that D&B is the recognised Rating Agency. Can you please confirm if other well respected Rating Agencies can be used in place of D&B?	No, Dunn and Bradstreet is the only Rating Agency that can be used.
32	Can you explain what you consider to be 'acceptable', 'acceptable with mitigating actions' and 'unacceptable' Attachment 5 Financial assessment template V 1.0?	<p>The financial assessment template uses standard accounting ratio to identify financial performance in 4 key areas; Profitability, Solvency, Liquidity and Efficiency. The template should be available as part of the bid pack for reference. The overall conclusion relating to risk in regards of "Acceptable" or "Unacceptable" is the professional opinion of qualified accountants.</p> <p>This is an intentional decision as it allows non-financial metrics and factors to be taken into account and allows the risk to be analysed against the risk appetite for the procurement. Ultimately the decision is to assess if the risk is acceptable based on the allowable risk for the procurement or lot within the procurement.</p>
33	Can you explain what you consider to be 'acceptable', 'acceptable with mitigating actions' and 'unacceptable' in Part 5 Financial risk of Attachment 2a – Selection questionnaire??	<p>At the point of requesting accounts the bidder can provide any additional information/commentary that will help to provide an understanding to the financial position of the company. All submitted information will be taken into account when assessing with adjustments made for reliability and validity of information.</p> <p>If an assessment results in "Acceptable with mitigating actions" the bidder will most likely be asked to provide a guarantor. Again at this point some bidders provide additional information for a secondary assessment, particularly if they do not have a related company capable of providing a guarantor.</p>
34	Can you confirm the criteria to be used for determining whether a Framework Agreement Guarantee and Call Off Guarantee are required?	Please refer to Part 5, Financial Risk of the Selection Questionnaire.
35	Can you confirm that a Parent Company Guarantee will not be required should the Financial review of the organisation be sufficiently robust?	Yes, that is correct. Please refer to Part 5, Financial Risk of the Selection Questionnaire.
36	Is a Framework Guarantee (as noted in Joint Schedule 8) required for the Contract?	<p>A Framework Guarantee may be required if a Bidder fails the requirements of the economic and financial assessment as stipulated in Part 5 Financial Risk of the Selection Questionnaire, and nominates a guarantor for this stage of the evaluation process.</p> <p>We will contact Bidders regarding the above requirement if a guarantor is required.</p> <p>If a Buyer determines that they require a Guarantee at Call-Off, this will form part of the Call-Off</p>

		<p>Procedure.</p> <p>Please refer to Part 5, Financial Risk of the Selection Questionnaire.</p>
37	Can a Group of Economic Operators submit a joint bid however, contract separately with Crown Commercial Service and each Contracting Authority under a Framework Agreement and a Call Off Agreement?	If the Group of Economic Operators are submitting a joint proposal we expect this would be because they are unable to supply the entirety of the Service individually. In such a case we would expect them each to sign the Framework Award Form and assume joint and several responsibility for the performance of the Framework Agreement including any Call Off Agreement.
38	Are the Core Terms finalised or can we request any amendments?	<p>You can ask us questions about the framework agreement and call off contract during the clarification period.</p> <p>We can confirm that the framework will remain as drafted. This framework will be delivered under The Public Contracts Regulations 2015.</p> <p>In accordance with paragraph 6 of Attachment 1 - About the framework, you can ask us questions about the Framework Contract and Call-Off Contract but please do not attempt to 'negotiate' the terms. All framework awards will be made under identical terms.</p>
39	What information do you require under Joint Schedule 4 - commercially sensitive information?	Under Joint Schedule 4, you are required to submit any information that you identify as confidential and generally confidential to your organisation and the disclosure would be subject of exemption under the FOIA and EIRs.
40	Could the Supplier terminate a Contract if required by law or operationally?	The circumstances under which a Supplier may terminate a Call-Off Contract are detailed at 10.6 of the Core Terms.
41	During the Framework Period can I increase my Framework Prices?	Please refer to Framework Schedule 3