



# Invitation to Quote

**Invitation to Quote (ITQ) on behalf of The Department for Business,  
Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)**

**Subject: Fake reviews research**

**Sourcing Reference Number: PS22196**

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# Section 1 – About UK Shared Business Services

## Putting the business into shared services

UK Shared Business Services Ltd (UK SBS) brings a commercial attitude to the public sector; helping our Contracting Authorities improve efficiency, generate savings and modernise.

It is our vision to become the leading service provider for the Contracting Authorities of shared business services in the UK public sector, continuously reducing cost and improving quality of business services for Government and the public sector.

Our broad range of expert services is shared by our Contracting Authorities. This allows Contracting Authorities the freedom to focus resources on core activities; innovating and transforming their own organisations.

Core services include Procurement, Finance, Grants Admissions, Human Resources, Payroll, ISS, and Property Asset Management all underpinned by our Service Delivery and Contact Centre teams.

UK SBS is a people rather than task focused business. It's what makes us different to the traditional transactional shared services centre. What is more, being a not-for-profit organisation owned by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), UK SBS' goals are aligned with the public sector and delivering best value for the UK taxpayer.

UK Shared Business Services Ltd changed its name from RCUK Shared Services Centre Ltd in March 2013.

## Our Customers

Growing from a foundation of supporting the Research Councils, 2012/13 saw Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) transition their procurement to UK SBS and Crown Commercial Services (CCS – previously Government Procurement Service) agree a Memorandum of Understanding with UK SBS to deliver two major procurement categories (construction and research) across Government.

UK SBS currently manages £700m expenditure for its Contracting Authorities. Our Contracting Authorities who have access to our services and Contracts are detailed [here](#).

## **Privacy Statement**

At UK Shared Business Services (UK SBS) we recognise and understand that your privacy is extremely important, and we want you to know exactly what kind of information we collect about you and how we use it.

This privacy notice link below details what you can expect from UK SBS when we collect your personal information.

- We will keep your data safe and private.
- We will not sell your data to anyone.

- We will only share your data with those you give us permission to share with and only for legitimate service delivery reasons.

<https://www.ukpbs.co.uk/use/pages/privacy.aspx>

## **Privacy Notice**

This notice sets out how the Contracting Authority will use your personal data, and your rights. It is made under Articles 13 and/or 14 of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

### **YOUR DATA**

The Contracting Authority will process the following personal data:

Names and contact details of employees involved in preparing and submitting the bid;  
Names and contact details of employees proposed to be involved in delivery of the contract;  
Names, contact details, age, qualifications and experience of employees whose CVs are submitted as part of the bid.

#### *Purpose*

The Contracting Authority are processing your personal data for the purposes of the tender exercise, or in the event of legal challenge to such tender exercise.

#### *Legal basis of processing*

The legal basis for processing your personal data is processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the data controller, such as the exercise of a function of the Crown, a Minister of the Crown, or a government department; the exercise of a function conferred on a person by an enactment; the exercise of a function of either House of Parliament; or the administration of justice.

#### *Recipients*

Your personal data will be shared by us with other Government Departments or public authorities where necessary as part of the tender exercise. The Contracting Authority may share your data if required to do so by law, for example by court order or to prevent fraud or other crime.

#### *Retention*

All submissions in connection with this tender exercise will be retained for a period of 7 years from the date of contract expiry, unless the contract is entered into as a deed in which case it will be kept for a period of 12 years from the date of contract expiry.

### **Your Rights**

You have the right to request information about how your personal data are processed, and to request a copy of that personal data.

You have the right to request that any inaccuracies in your personal data are rectified without delay.

You have the right to request that any incomplete personal data are completed, including by means of a supplementary statement.

You have the right to request that your personal data are erased if there is no longer a justification for them to be processed.

You have the right in certain circumstances (for example, where accuracy is contested) to request that the processing of your personal data is restricted.

You have the right to object to the processing of your personal data where it is processed for direct marketing purposes.

You have the right to object to the processing of your personal data.

### ***International Transfers***

As your personal data is stored on our IT infrastructure and shared with our data processors Microsoft and Amazon Web Services, it may be transferred and stored securely in the UK and European Economic Area. Where your personal data is stored outside the UK and EEA it will be subject to equivalent legal protection through the use of Model Contract Clauses.

### **Complaints**

If you consider that your personal data has been misused or mishandled, you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner, who is an independent regulator. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF  
0303 123 1113  
[casework@ico.org.uk](mailto:casework@ico.org.uk)

Any complaint to the Information Commissioner is without prejudice to your right to seek redress through the courts.

### **Contact Details**

The data controller for your personal data is:

The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

You can contact the Data Protection Officer at:

BEIS Data Protection Officer, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 1 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0ET. Email: [dataprotection@beis.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@beis.gov.uk)

## Section 2 – About the Contracting Authority

### Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) was created as a result of a merger between the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), as part of the Machinery of Government (MoG) changes in July 2016.

The Department is responsible for:

- developing and delivering a comprehensive industrial strategy and leading the government's relationship with business;
- ensuring that the country has secure energy supplies that are reliable, affordable and clean;
- ensuring the UK remains at the leading edge of science, research and innovation; and
- tackling climate change.

BEIS is a ministerial department, supported by 46 agencies and public bodies.

We have around 2,500 staff working for BEIS. Our partner organisations include 9 executive agencies employing around 14,500 staff.

<http://www.beis.gov.uk>

## Section 3 – Working with the Contracting Authority.

In this section you will find details of your Procurement contact point and the timescales relating to this opportunity.

Section 3 – Contact details		
1.1.	Contracting Authority Name and address	The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)
1.2.	Buyer name	Joe Wightman
1.3.	Buyer contact details	<a href="mailto:professionalservices@uksbs.co.uk">professionalservices@uksbs.co.uk</a>
1.4.	Maximum value of the Opportunity	£60,000.00 excluding VAT
1.5.	Process for the submission of clarifications and Bids	<b>All correspondence shall be submitted within the Messaging Centre of the Jaggaer eSourcing portal. Guidance on how to obtain support on using the Jaggaer eSourcing portal can be found in Section 7.25. Please note submission of a Bid to any email address including the Buyer <u>will</u> result in the Bid <u>not</u> being considered, unless formally advised to do so by UKSBS.</b>

Section 3 - Timescales		
1.6.	Date of Issue of Contract Advert on Contracts Finder	Wednesday 29 <sup>th</sup> June 2022
1.7.	Latest date / time ITQ clarification questions shall be received through the Jaggaer eSourcing Portal	Monday, 11 July 2022 11:00
1.8.	Latest date / time ITQ clarification answers should be sent to all Bidders by the Buyer through the Jaggaer eSourcing Portal	Wednesday, 13 July 2022 11:00
1.9.	Latest date and time ITQ Bid shall be submitted through the Jaggaer eSourcing Portal ( <b>the Deadline</b> )	Monday, 18 July 2022 11:00
1.10.	Anticipated notification date of successful and unsuccessful Bids	Monday, 01 August 2022 11:00
1.11.	Anticipated Contract Award date	Monday, 08 August 2022
1.12.	Anticipated Contract Start date	Monday, 15 August 2022
1.13.	Anticipated Contract End date	Monday, 23 January 2023
1.14.	Bid Validity Period	90 Days

## Section 4 – Specification

<b>1. Background</b>
<p>In 2021, BEIS launched the Reforming Consumer and Competition Policy (RCCP) consultation.<sup>1</sup> The department asked for views on ways for government to address fake online reviews and proposed adding practices related to this to the list of automatically unfair commercial practices in Schedule 1 of the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations (CPUTRs) 2008.</p> <p>These are reviews that do not reflect an actual consumer's genuine experience of a good or service, and have been left in an attempt to manipulate consumer perception or target a particular business.</p> <p>The policy proposals are currently in development and are subject to further evidence gathering and cost-benefit analysis. Although there are wide ranging estimates from various consumer groups and review sites on the prevalence of fake reviews,<sup>2,3,4</sup> the evidence base on the harm they cause to consumers is relatively underdeveloped. Therefore, this research will provide high-quality evidence to the policy and analytical teams that cannot be achieved using internal resources primarily due to time constraints as well as some skill constraints.</p> <p>Government plans to consult on the details of the developing policy proposals in due course. An impact assessment (IA) assessing the costs and benefits of the policy options is expected to be published alongside the consultation. This research is intended to help develop the cost-benefit analysis (CBA) and inform the policy solution. It is expected that the outputs of this research will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve understanding of the scale of the problem of fake reviews and how they impact consumers</li><li>• Influence the development of the policy by testing potential solutions and ensuring policy making is evidence based</li><li>• Provide evidence for the CBA which will assess the impacts of policy options, on both consumers and businesses.</li></ul>
<b>2. Aims and Objectives of the Project</b>
<p>The aim of this work is to understand:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) The prevalence of online fake reviews for a pre-determined basket of goods on the most popular third-party UK e-commerce websites</li><li>b) How online fake reviews influence consumer choice when making online purchases</li><li>c) The consumer detriment that occurs as a result of fake reviews and how this varies by demographic groups</li><li>d) The effectiveness of potential non-regulatory interventions in nullifying the harmful impact of fake reviews on consumer decisions</li></ol>

<sup>1</sup> Reforming Consumer and Competition Policy Consultation (2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-competition-and-consumer-policy>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fakespot.com/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://reviewmeta.com/>

<sup>4</sup> Ott, M., Cardie, C. and Hancock, J., 2012, April. Estimating the prevalence of deception in online review communities. In Proceedings of the 21st international conference on World Wide Web (pp. 201-210). <https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1145/2187836.2187864>



By answering these questions, the department will gain insight into how widespread the problem of fake reviews may be in the UK e-commerce sector as well as into how harmful they are to consumers. It is not within the scope of this research to understand the prevalence and associated harm of fake reviews outside of UK e-commerce. The department understands that fake reviews also pose a large problem on social media<sup>5,6,7</sup> and other review hosting platforms. That said, given the number and variety of platforms that can host reviews, the department wishes to limit the scope to UK e-commerce platforms to allow a deep dive on how consumer behaviour is influenced by misleading reviews when spending decisions are involved.

The results of this analysis will be used to:

- Inform policy development and ensure policy decisions are evidence based and informed by the testing of potential solutions.
- Inform the development of the CBA of options to help support policy decision-making, particularly the impacts (monetary and non-monetary) policy options would have on businesses and consumers.
- Act as baseline evidence for monitoring the results of potential regulatory changes, to assess the effectiveness of the proposals in reducing the incidence and impact of fake online reviews.

### 3. Suggested Methodology

<b>If applicable:</b>		<b>Insert numbers:</b>
<b>Total number of Participants (experimental design)</b>		<b>4,000</b>
<b>Total number of Interviews (survey)</b>		<b>4,000</b>
<b>Total number of Interviews (qualitative)</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Total number of Focus Groups</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Total number of Case Studies</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Any other specific requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a sample of goods from the chosen online platforms based on the basket of goods outlined below.</li> <li>• Establishing and outlining a standardised methodological framework for spotting suspicious reviews that is replicable and based on existing evidence on how to spot fake online reviews.</li> </ul>	

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.which.co.uk/news/2022/01/how-facebook-fuels-amazons-fake-reviews/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-expects-facebook-and-ebay-to-tackle-sale-of-fake-reviews>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-intervention-leads-to-further-facebook-action-on-fake-reviews>

The department sets out a proposed research approach below. However, the department welcomes feedback on this suggested methodology and welcomes differing proposals or amendments from bidders should there be other means to better meet the objectives of this research.

The department envisages a two phased approach, split by a break clause between the phases, that centres around a pre-determined basket of goods:

1. The aim of Phase 1 will be to estimate the prevalence of suspicious reviews, for a chosen basket of goods defined by the contractor, on the most popular third-party e-commerce sites used by UK consumers.
2. Phase 2 should then aim to test the effects of practices related to fake reviews on consumer choice of the selected goods. This phase should also establish the types and magnitude of consumer detriment experienced by subjects, both monetarily and non-monetarily, as well as testing intervention options that aim to mitigate the effects of the fake review related practices.

### **Basket of goods**

A common basket of goods across phases will allow the results of Phase 1 to be built upon by Phase 2, whereby the goods where prevalence is assessed in Phase 1 are also the goods tested with consumers in Phase 2.

The table below shows a breakdown of online purchases by good category from the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Internet Access Survey (2020)<sup>8</sup>.

*Table 1 - Reported Online Purchases, Internet Access Survey, ONS (2020)*

<b>Good category</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents reporting purchase of good (%)</b>
Clothes (including sports clothing), shoes and accessories	<b>55</b>
Deliveries from restaurants, fast-food chains or catering services	<b>32</b>
Printed books, magazines or newspapers	<b>29</b>
Furniture, home accessories or gardening products	<b>28</b>
Computers, tablets, mobile phones or accessories	<b>24</b>
Children's toys or childcare items	<b>22</b>
Cosmetics, beauty or wellness products	<b>22</b>
Cleaning products or personal hygiene products	<b>18</b>

For experimental reasons, such as having goods which are desirable for a wide range of participants, the basket of goods should have the following characteristics:

1. Commonly purchased online
2. Commonly sold on e-commerce websites by third party traders
3. Physical and non-perishable products
4. Gender balanced
5. Heterogenous to the extent brand and perceived quality will play a role in decision making
6. Intended for use by adults

Based on the above data, the criteria set out above and additional internal datasets within the department, government recommends the following three good categories: home and kitchen goods, electronic accessories and health and cosmetics. Although these categories were not the most reported purchases, they meet the above criteria. For example, although clothing was the most reported purchase by respondents, a large proportion of online clothing sales are through reputable first party retailers and brands.

The second most reported purchase is food deliveries; however, services (like deliveries) are not within the scope of this research given the difficulties in testing these types of products with consumers in an experimental setting. In the case of children's goods, consumer preferences may depend on parental status and may yield null consumer choices during the second phase of research if someone is not a parent or carer.

The department welcomes additional thoughts and challenges from the contractor on how to construct a basket of goods, particularly if they wish to propose alternative methods to construct a basket. The goods should aim to meet the proposed criteria set out above but the department welcomes feedback on the criteria from bidders. Alterations to the basket of goods should be justified by the contractor and will be subject to BEIS clearance following review of the initial methodology report provided to the department.

Based on the categories chosen above, the department has set out an illustrative basket of goods below, that it believes will meet the criteria. These have been selected through identifying the most sold products in 2021/2022 on popular e-commerce sites for each relevant category.

*Table 2 - Example basket of goods*

Product category	Products
Home and kitchen	Kettle, iron, vacuum, desk chair
Electronic accessories	Bluetooth headphones, keyboard, mobile charger, smart speaker
Health and cosmetics	Skincare product, yoga mat, re-usable water bottle

## **Phase 1: Estimating prevalence on popular UK e-commerce sites**

Suppliers will be required to create a protocol for the entirety of the research project during Phase 1. Furthermore, there will be a break clause for this research project to be used at the department's discretion after the completion of the first phase.

The first phase should estimate the prevalence of reviews displaying signs of being commissioned, intentionally misleading or over inflated for the pre-selected basket of goods on the most popular (in terms of number of visitors) third party e-commerce platforms used by UK consumers.<sup>9</sup> A technique to do this could be, but is not limited to data science approaches based on existing evidence on how to identify fake reviews. Previous examples of approaches used include web-scraping<sup>10,11</sup> and machine-learning.<sup>12,13,14</sup>

First party e-commerce retailers are not in scope as existing evidence does not suggest that individual brands are employing fake review related practices, rather these are activities undertaken on popular third-party e-commerce platforms.

The contractor will be responsible for:

1. Creating a research protocol for the entirety of the project that should include an ethical evaluation of both phases.
2. Creating a sample of goods from the chosen online platforms based on the basket of goods outlined. The basket of goods should contain a range of cheaper to more expensive products. This will enable the interactions of price and misleading reviews to be tested in Phase 2. In terms of specific product types, the department proposes that three products of the same price are chosen for each good in the basket to ensure price effects do not overpower the impact of reviews on consumer decisions made in Phase 2. The basket of goods selected should also have a range of star ratings to form the baseline against which the fake review treatments are applied. For example, for any one product type, star ratings ranging from 3 to 5 stars could be selected whereby the genuine 3-star product is inflated to 5-stars as an intervention.
3. Furthermore, the contractor should ensure that the goods chosen have star ratings which reflect their actual quality and price, ensuring the chosen basket itself has not been significantly skewed by outright misleading reviews. The department would welcome suggestions from the contractor on how they would complete this action. The contractor should consider that sellers who engage more with reviewers will likely gain more positive reviews compared to sellers of similar quality products who engage less. This is fair

<sup>9</sup><https://www.webretailer.com/b/online-marketplaces-uk/>

This article covers 12 online marketplaces (either pure-play marketplaces or retailers with a third-party marketplace) with more than one million monthly visits from the UK, based on data from [SimilarWeb](#). A global list of online marketplaces, based on the same data, is available in [The World's Top Online Marketplaces](#).

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.fakespot.com/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://reviewmeta.com/>

<sup>12</sup> Salminen, J., Kandpal, C., Kamel, A.M., Jung, S.G. and Jansen, B.J., 2022. Creating and detecting fake reviews of online products. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 64, p.102771. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0969698921003374>

<sup>13</sup> Ott, M., Cardie, C. and Hancock, J., 2012, April. Estimating the prevalence of deception in online review communities. In *Proceedings of the 21st international conference on World Wide Web* (pp. 201-210). <https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1145/2187836.2187864>

<sup>14</sup> Ott, M., Choi, Y., Cardie, C. and Hancock, J.T., 2011. Finding deceptive opinion spam by any stretch of the imagination. arXiv preprint arXiv:1107.4557. <https://arxiv.org/abs/1107.4557>

practice, so the supplier should take a proportionate approach in ensuring selected products have reviews and ratings reflective of their actual quality.

4. Building an anonymised dataset of reviews for the chosen basket of goods including star rating and review text. Web-scraping, an available Application Programming Interface (API) or manual sampling techniques could be used to build the dataset. It is the responsibility of the supplier to ensure the final method and resulting dataset are in compliance with data privacy laws and any website terms and conditions. The dataset should be a statistically significant sample of all a product's reviews and reflect any final displayed ratings.
5. Reviewing existing advice on how to spot fake reviews, for which some examples are referenced.<sup>15,16,17,18,19</sup> A few examples of this advice are but are not limited to: looking at whether many highly rated reviews have been posted in a short period; whether there are duplicated positive reviews; whether reviews are referring to another product after a seller has manipulated a product page<sup>20</sup> and; whether reviews are suspiciously emotive.
6. Establishing and outlining a standardised methodological framework for spotting suspicious reviews that is replicable (e.g. by the department or subsequent researchers based on information to be included in the final report) and based on existing evidence on how to spot fake online reviews. An underlying automated data science approach to the framework is recommended to remove any error and subjectivity arising from human evaluation.
7. Using the framework to produce a range of estimates on the prevalence of likely fake or suspicious reviews and inflated star ratings using the review data gathered for the selected basket of goods. This could involve using data science techniques, or other research methods that bidders propose.
8. Considering factors around whether a platform has/is already undertaking activities to remove/moderate suspicious reviews. Based on publicly available evidence regarding website operator moderation activities, the supplier should provide commentary on how this may have impacted any of the provided estimates, if at all.
9. Ensuring that the sample tested allows for statistically significant results.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/online-shopping/article/online-shopping/how-to-spot-a-fake-review-aiDaS3elivfr>

<sup>16</sup> Anderson, E.T. and Simester, D.I., 2014. Reviews without a purchase: Low ratings, loyal customers, and deception. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 51(3), pp.249-269.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1509/jmr.13.0209>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0969698921003374>

<sup>18</sup> Chen, L., Li, W., Chen, H. and Geng, S., 2019. Detection of fake reviews: Analysis of sellers' manipulation behavior. *Sustainability*, 11(17), p.4802. <https://www.mdpi.com/527126>

<sup>19</sup> Hu, N., Bose, I., Koh, N.S. and Liu, L., 2012. Manipulation of online reviews: An analysis of ratings, readability, and sentiments. *Decision support systems*, 52(3), pp.674-684.  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167923611002065>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/nicolenguyen/amazon-review-reuse-fraud>

10.

## **Phase 2: Impact on consumer decisions**

This phase of the methodology should aim to estimate the impact of fake review related practices on consumer behaviour and detriment with the goods assessed in Phase 1. It should also identify the elements of review fakery that are most effective in influencing consumer choice as well as assessing how effective non-regulatory policy options are in mitigating the impact of fake reviews. As a point of reference, a recent study by Which? assessed the effects on consumer behaviour using an experimental design.<sup>21</sup>

The department recommends that the contractor takes a factorial experimental approach to assess how various practices related to fake reviews impact consumer choice. This can be done through inviting participants to interact with a medium emulating popular e-commerce websites. Through this they can choose to 'buy' one out of the three goods presented for each product type in the basket based on information provided in a real-world scenario (including product reviews). One product's page should have treatments of review fakery applied. Here, multiple factors can be formed to measure how different fake review treatments impact consumer choice for the selected basket of goods.

This phase should also gather wider qualitative information on the wellbeing of participants once they are provided with a hypothetical scenario where the quality of their chosen good wasn't as the review information suggested.

The contractor will be responsible for:

1. Ensuring the research protocol created in Phase 1 includes an ethical evaluation of this experimental phase.
2. Creating a sample that is representative of the UK adult population to take part in the experiment. The sample should also recruit for a mix of levels of online activity amongst participants. Bidders should suggest the sample sizes they expect to use in their bids and where they would get the sample from. This should include statistical power calculations generating a sample size large enough to yield significant results at the 95% confidence interval based on the expected effect size of the treatments. Strong bids will demonstrate considerations around optimising or adding treatment groups if anticipated sample sizes are over-powered.
3. Collecting information on demographic characteristics of participants
4. Collecting information on online activity of participants
5. Testing the hypothesis that if consumers are exposed to falsely positive reviews and star ratings when purchasing goods online, they are more likely to make a purchase than they would be if they had access to genuine review information.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://consumerinsight.which.co.uk/articles/fake-reviews>

6. Conducting an experiment, where consumers are tasked with choosing one of three products from each group, presented on a user interface that is kept as close as possible to an online retail environment. This should be accessible from both a mobile and a desktop, given the widespread use of smart phones in online shopping. Alternatively, a survey approach could be used if the survey is designed to look like the user-interfaces used by popular e-commerce sites, but it should ensure the participant has easy access to all the information they would have if interacting with a real website.
7. Allocating product groups across participants. The contractor could ask participants what products they would be most interested in purchasing and then use a least-fill approach<sup>22</sup> to allocate to products across the sample.
8. Ensuring that when presented with purchasing decisions, participants are only asked to choose between products of the same type and price (as required in Phase 1). This is to ensure that price effects do not overpower purchasing decisions.
9. Measuring each group's likelihood of purchasing a product in the experiment (the dependent variable).
10. Creating a factorial experimental design with five factors in a 5 x 2 format where treatments related to fake reviews (the independent variables) are distributed. Treatments should include but are not limited to inflated star ratings, fake positive review text (subtle and strong) and platform endorsement (e.g. 'Amazon's choice'). The contractor should also test potential non-regulatory policy solutions that have been agreed with the department through treatments, such as a warning banner, highlighting to participants that there may be fake reviews on the product page. Strong bids will propose additional viable non-regulatory solutions to be tested. The department proposes that inflated star ratings would be the common treatment across the 5 x 2 factorial design.
11. Creating and placing 'subtle' and 'strong' fake review text in the appropriate treatment groups. The text used must be reflective of how misleading review text is implemented in reality, for example, the fakery used should not be strikingly obvious to participants as validity will be diminished. The framework used in Phase 1 should inform how fakery is implemented in the experiment. Given that the ability to spot suspicious reviews will vary from participant to participant, the use of 'subtle' and 'strong' fake review text treatments will inform the most effective elements of review fakery. For example, the 'strong' fake review text could include more duplicate reviews or positive review clustering in comparison to the 'subtle' treatment group.
12. Considering mediator and moderator variables and how they affect the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the experimental design. Bidders should include how they intend to do this in their bids.

13. An example of what the factorial design could look like is included below (where sample sizes have been generated randomly for display purposes and should not be considered final). The contractor may alter the proposed treatments and factorial design to optimise sample size and effect interactions, changes will be subject to BEIS clearance at an interim meeting after the completion of Phase 1.

*Table 3 - Example of sample treatments*

		Inflated star rating		
		No	Yes	Sample size
<b>Additional treatments</b>	No	400	400	N = 800
	'Subtle' fake review text	400	400	N = 800
	'Strong' fake review text	400	400	N = 800
	Platform endorsement & fake review text	400	400	N = 800
	Warning banner & fake review text	400	400	N = 800
		N = 2,000	N = 2,000	<b>N = 4,000</b>

14. Ensuring all imitated product pages for the pre-selected basket of goods present price and other key product information.
15. Recording the time taken for each participant to make purchase decisions to understand whether the various treatments impact the time taken for participants to shop around.
16. Ensuring that the participants have a chance to win the products used to incentivise authentic consumer choices based on their true preferences. Participants could be asked to rank the items in preferential order prior to the experiment to determine which product they would prefer to have if they should win it.
17. Surveying participants after the experiment has concluded. The department suggests that the survey(s) should aim to do the following but welcomes suggestions from bidders too:



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Ask participants to rank in order of most important to least important their purchasing factors when shopping online. These factors could include but are not limited to purchase price, quality, online user reviews, style/fashion, environmental impact.</li> <li>b. Ask participants if they read some or all of the reviews for each product. For those participants that did read some, then these participants should be asked to rate the reviews that they were presented with. The department would welcome suggestions on a suitable rating scale from bidders.</li> <li>c. Present hypothetical situations to assess how participants trust is affected. For example, assessing whether they would purchase another 5-star good from the same supplier if it's quality upon receiving the product wasn't as the reviews suggested.</li> <li>d. Present hypothetical situations to assess whether participants would change their behaviour in the future. For example, assessing how much more/less time participants would spend on future purchase decisions.</li> <li>e. Present hypothetical situations to assess what their willingness to pay for genuine information would be.</li> <li>f. Present hypothetical situations to assess the effects on participants' wellbeing of being misled by elements of review fakery.</li> </ul> <p>18. Assessing the risk of hypothetical bias for d, e and f above. Bidders are encouraged to suggest potential mitigations for reducing the risk of hypothetical bias.</p> <p>19. Assessing the external validity of the experiment and whether the findings would be relevant for other products and services which use online reviews. Factors which impact external validity may include how representative the experiment is of a real-world setting (including how participants have to make a purchase decision) and stated rather than revealed preferences in the wider wellbeing assessment. The department welcomes suggestions on how the contractor would complete this assessment. An example could be adjusting the moderator variables where possible to help identify the limitations of when the relationships between variables hold.</p>	<div data-bbox="212 1395 762 1429" data-label="Section-Header"> <h4>4. Deliverables &amp; Payment Milestones</h4> </div> <div data-bbox="212 1462 1401 1496" data-label="Text"> <p>As a summary, the following should be delivered by the supplier by the end of the contract:</p> </div> <div data-bbox="212 1529 997 1955" data-label="List-Group"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial paper - Methodology for both research phases</li> <li>2. Methodology report – to accompany the final report</li> <li>3. Interim report for Phase One</li> <li>4. Final report and presentation</li> <li>5. Underlying datasets</li> <li>6. QA Log</li> <li>7. Risk Register</li> </ul> </div>
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## **Payment Milestones**

Payments will be made in two stages –

Milestone 1 will comprise of Stages 1-3 up the delivery of the Interim Report.

Milestone 2 will comprise of Stage 4 (Final report and all additional delivery materials).

More specifically, the outputs of the two phases of research should cover the following:

### **Phase 1**

An assessment of the prevalence of likely fake/suspicious reviews across the chosen basket of goods for the chosen e-commerce platforms. This should include, but is not limited to:

- i. The number of written reviews out of the total examined displaying signs of being commissioned, intentionally misleading or over inflated.
- ii. The number of star ratings out of the total examined which show signs of being over inflated based on the reviews associated with them.
- iii. The extent to which star ratings are inflated based on seemingly genuine reviews of the product.

The department does not expect the contractor to answer how many reviews are definitively fake, as this is not possible. Rather it is the contractor's responsibility to assess whether a review is likely fake or not based on research conducted during scoping of Phase 1.

### **Phase 2**

An assessment of how fake reviews and inflated star ratings impact consumer behaviour in an online e-commerce setting. This should include, but is not limited to:

- i. An estimation of the impact the treatments have on a consumer's decision to select a good over an alternative with fair reviews across demographic groups relative to the control group.
- ii. An estimation of the impact the treatments have on a consumer's time spent to select a good relative to the control group.
- iii. An estimation of the impact of different consumer facing interventions in nullifying the effect of fake reviews on consumer choice across different demographic groups.
- iv. An assessment of the moderator and mediator variables impact on the relationships between the independent and dependent variables.
- v. An assessment of how fake review related practices impact a consumer's willingness-to-pay for a good.
- vi. An assessment of how fake reviews impacted trust, wellbeing, and future intentions across different demographic groups.
- vii. An assessment of the external validity of the findings across other goods and services

sold online.

The final report will include:

- a) An executive summary
- b) A summary of the methodology used at each phase and any underlying assumptions and caveats.
- c) A summary table containing the estimated number of suspicious reviews and star ratings (alongside the total sample size) for each product in the selected basket of goods.
- d) A summary of the findings from Phase 1 including a description of the framework used and the features of these reviews and their rate of occurrence in the identification of suspicious reviews.
- e) A summary table of outputs from Phase 2, including a breakdown of consumer product choices made in each group; regressions tables plotting the effects on product choice for each group; regressions tables plotting the effects on decision time for each group; tables of panel demographic characteristics and tables of responses to questions on review ratings, well-being and future behaviour.
- f) Written detail of findings from the experiment including commentary on the impact on consumer choice. The supplier should also include commentary on how this impacts interaction with price and demographic groups.
- g) The supplier will provide a virtual presentation to BEIS to disseminate the main findings in the final report.
- h) The final report and presentation are to be completed by the end of August.

Furthermore, the supplier should provide cleaned data sets of any data gathered during the research.

### **Terms and Conditions**

Bidders are to note that any requested modifications to the Contracting Authority Terms and Conditions on the grounds of statutory and legal matters only, shall be raised as a formal clarification during the permitted clarification period.

## Section 5 – Evaluation of Bids

The evaluation model below shall be used for this ITQ, which will be determined to two decimal places.

Where a question is 'for information only' it will not be scored.

The evaluation team may comprise staff from UK SBS and the Contracting Authority and any specific external stakeholders the Contracting Authority deems required.

To maintain a high degree of rigour in the evaluation of your bid, a process of commercial moderation will be undertaken to ensure consistency by all evaluators.

After evaluation and if required moderation scores will be finalised by performing a calculation to identify (at question level) the mean average of all evaluators (Example – a question is scored by three evaluators and judged as scoring 5, 5 and 6. These scores will be added together and divided by the number of evaluators to produce the final score of 5.33 ( $5+5+6=16 \div 3 = 5.33$ ))

Pass / Fail criteria		
Evaluation Envelope	Q No.	Question subject
Qualification	SEL1.2	Employment breaches/ Equality
Qualification	SEL2.12	General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Act and Data Protection Act 2018
Qualification	FOI1.1	Freedom of Information
Qualification	AW1.1	Form of Bid
Qualification	AW1.3	Certificate of Bona Fide Bid
Qualification	AW3.1	Validation check
Qualification	AW4.1	Compliance to the Contract Terms
Qualification	AW4.2	Changes to the Contract Terms
Commercial	AW5.3	Firm and Fixed Price
Commercial	AW5.4	Maximum Budget
Technical	AW6.1	Compliance to the Specification
Technical	AW6.2	Variable Bids
-	-	Invitation to Quote response received on time within the Jaggaer eSourcing Portal
In the event of a Bidder failing to meet the requirements of a Mandatory pass / fail criteria, the Contracting Authority reserves the right to disqualify the Bidder and not consider evaluation of any of the Award stage scoring methodology or Mandatory pass / fail criteria.		

## Scoring criteria

### Evaluation Justification Statement

In consideration of this particular requirement the Contracting Authority has decided to evaluate Potential Providers by adopting the weightings / scoring mechanism detailed within this ITQ. The Contracting Authority considers these weightings to be in line with existing best practice for a requirement of this type.

Evaluation Envelope	Q No.	Question subject	Maximum Marks	
			Overall	Breakdown
Commercial	AW5.1	Price	20%	20%
Technical	PROJ1.1	Approach / Methodology	80%	30%
Technical	PROJ1.2	Skills / Staff		20%
Technical	PROJ1.3	Understanding the project environment		10%
Technical	PROJ1.4	Project plan and timescales		10%
Technical	PROJ1.5	Risk management		10%

## Evaluation of criteria

### Non-Commercial Elements

Each question will be judged on a score from 0 to 100, which shall be subjected to a multiplier to reflect the percentage of the evaluation criteria allocated to that question.

Where an evaluation criterion is worth 20% then the 0-100 score achieved will be multiplied by 20%.

Example if a Bidder scores 60 from the available 100 points this will equate to 12% by using the following calculation:

$$\text{Score} = \{\text{weighting percentage}\} \times \{\text{bidder's score}\} = 20\% \times 60 = 12$$

The same logic will be applied to groups of questions which equate to a single evaluation criterion.

The 0-100 score shall be based on (unless otherwise stated within the question):

0	The Question is not answered, or the response is completely unacceptable.
10	Extremely poor response – they have completely missed the point of the question.
20	Very poor response and not wholly acceptable. Requires major revision to the response to make it acceptable. Only partially answers the requirement, with major deficiencies and little relevant detail proposed.
40	Poor response only partially satisfying the question requirements with deficiencies apparent. Some useful evidence provided but response falls well short of expectations. Low probability of being a capable supplier.
60	Response is acceptable but remains basic and could have been expanded upon. Response is sufficient but does not inspire.
80	Good response which describes their capabilities in detail which provides high levels of assurance consistent with a quality provider. The response includes a full description of techniques and measurements currently employed.

100	Response is exceptional and clearly demonstrates they are capable of meeting the requirement. No significant weaknesses noted. The response is compelling in its description of techniques and measurements currently employed, providing full assurance consistent with a quality provider.
<p>All questions will be scored based on the above mechanism. As there will be multiple evaluators their individual scores and commentary will be recorded, then a consensus meeting will be convened by the evaluators to determine your score. Note this will not include any chairperson or lead, as all evaluators are of equal status.</p> <p><b>Example</b>  Evaluator 1 scored your bid as 60  Evaluator 2 scored your bid as 60  Evaluator 3 scored your bid as 40</p> <p>The convened meeting came to a consensus that the final recorded score to given to your submission against this question should be 60, with the justification and reasons for this score recorded.</p> <p>Once the consensus process has been finalised, all justifications recorded and all non priced scores are agreed, this will then be subject to an independent commercial moderation review.</p> <p>If deemed to be required by the commercial lead during the review, a moderation meeting will then be convened by the commercial lead with the evaluators concerned and all changes if necessary, will be justified and formally recorded relative to the regulatory obligations associated with this procurement, so as to ensure that the procurement has been undertaken in a robust and transparent way.</p>	
<b>Commercial Elements</b> will be evaluated on the following criteria.	
<p>The lowest price for a response which meets the pass criteria shall score 100. All other bids shall be scored on a pro rata basis in relation to the lowest price. The score is then subject to a multiplier to reflect the percentage value of the Commercial criterion.</p> <p>For example - Bid 1 £100,000 scores 100.  Bid 2 £120,000 differential of £20,000 or 20% remove 20% from price scores 80  Bid 3 £150,000 differential £50,000 remove 50% from price scores 50.  Bid 4 £175,000 differential £75,000 remove 75% from price scores 25.  Bid 5 £200,000 differential £100,000 remove 100% from price scores 0.  Bid 6 £300,000 differential £200,000 remove 100% from price scores 0.</p> <p>Where the scoring criterion is worth 50% then the 0-100 score achieved will be multiplied by 50.</p> <p>In the example if a supplier scores 80 from the available 100 points this will equate to 40% by using the following calculation: Score/Total Points multiplied by 50 (80/100 x 50 = 40)</p> <p>The lowest score possible is 0 even if the price submitted is more than 100% greater than the lowest price.</p> <p>This evaluation criteria will therefore not be subject to any averaging, as this is a mathematical scoring criterion, but will still be subject to a commercial review.</p>	

## Evaluation process

The evaluation process will feature some, if not all, the following phases.

Stage	Summary of activity
Receipt and Opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ITQ logged upon opening in alignment with UK SBS's procurement procedures.</li><li>• Any ITQ Bid received after the closing date will be rejected unless circumstances attributed to UK SBS, the Contracting Authority or the eSourcing Portal beyond the bidder control are responsible for late submission.</li></ul>
Compliance check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Check all Mandatory requirements are acceptable to the Contracting Authority.</li><li>• Unacceptable Bids maybe subject to clarification by the Contracting Authority or rejection of the Bid.</li></ul>
Scoring of the Bid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluation team will independently score the Bid and provide a commentary of their scoring justification against the criteria.</li></ul>
Clarifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Evaluation team may require written clarification to Bids</li></ul>
Re - scoring of the Bid and Clarifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Following Clarification responses, the Evaluation team reserve the right to independently re-score the Bid and Clarifications and provide a commentary of their re-scoring justification against the Evaluation criteria.</li></ul>
Moderation meeting (if required to reach an award decision)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To review the outcomes of the Commercial review</li><li>• To agree final scoring for each Bid, relative rankings of the Bids</li><li>• To confirm contents of the feedback letters to provide details of scoring and relative and proportionate feedback on the unsuccessful Bidders response in comparison with the successful Bidders response</li></ul>
Due diligence of the Bid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the Contracting Authority may request the following requirements at any stage of the Procurement:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Submission of insurance documents from the Bidder</li><li>○ Request for evidence of documents / accreditations referenced in the / Invitation to Quote response / Bid and / or Clarifications from the Bidder</li><li>○ Taking up of Bidder references from the Bidders Customers.</li><li>○ Financial Credit check for the Bidder</li></ul></li></ul>
Validation of unsuccessful Bidders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To confirm contents of the letters to provide details of scoring and meaningful feedback on the unsuccessful Bidders Bid in comparison with the successful Bidders Bid.</li></ul>

## **Section 6 – Evaluation Response Questionnaire**

Bidders should note that the evaluation response questionnaire is located within the **Jaggaer eSourcing Portal**.

Guidance on how to register and use the Jaggaer eSourcing portal is available at

<https://beisgroup.ukp.app.jaggaer.com/>

**PLEASE NOTE THE QUESTIONS ARE NOT NUMBERED SEQUENTIALLY**



## Section 7 – General Information

### What makes a good bid – some simple do's 😊

#### DO:

- 7.1 Do comply with Procurement document instructions. Failure to do so may lead to disqualification.
- 7.2 Do provide the Bid on time, and in the required format. Remember that the date / time given for a response is the last date that it can be accepted; we are legally bound to disqualify late submissions. Responses received after the date indicated in the Section 3 of the ITQ shall not be considered by the Contracting Authority, unless the Bidder can justify that the reason for the delay is solely attributable to the Contracting Authority
- 7.3 Do ensure you have read all the training materials to utilise the eSourcing portal prior to responding to this Bid. If you send your Bid by email or post it will be rejected.
- 7.4 Do use Microsoft Word, PowerPoint Excel 97-03 or compatible formats, or PDF unless agreed in writing by the Buyer. If you use another file format without our written permission, we may reject your Bid.
- 7.5 Do ensure you utilise the Jaggaer eSourcing messaging system to raise any clarifications to our ITQ. You should note that we will release the answer to the question to all Bidders and where we suspect the question contains confidential information, we may modify the content of the question to protect the anonymity of the Bidder or their proposed solution
- 7.6 Do answer the question, it is not enough simply to cross-reference to a 'policy', web page or another part of your Bid, the evaluation team have limited time to assess bids and if they can't find the answer, they can't score it.
- 7.7 Do consider who the Contracting Authority is and what they want – a generic answer does not necessarily meet every Contracting Authority's needs.
- 7.8 Do reference your documents correctly, specifically where supporting documentation is requested e.g. referencing the question/s they apply to.
- 7.9 Do provide clear, concise and ideally generic contact details; telephone numbers, e-mails.
- 7.10 Do complete all questions in the evaluation response questionnaire or we may reject your Bid.
- 7.11 Do ensure that the Response and any documents accompanying it are in the English Language, the Contracting Authority reserve the right to disqualify any full or part responses that are not in English.
- 7.12 Do check and recheck your Bid before dispatch.

## What makes a good bid – some simple do not's Ⓜ

### DO NOT

- 7.13 Do not cut and paste from a previous document and forget to change the previous details such as the previous buyer's name.
- 7.14 Do not attach 'glossy' brochures that have not been requested, they will not be read unless we have asked for them. Only send what has been requested and only send supplementary information if we have offered the opportunity so to do.
- 7.15 Do not share the Procurement documents, they are confidential and should not be shared with anyone without the Buyers written permission.
- 7.16 Do not seek to influence the procurement process by requesting meetings or contacting UK SBS or the Contracting Authority to discuss your Bid. If your Bid requires clarification the Buyer will contact you. All information secured outside of formal Buyer communications shall have no Legal standing or worth and should not be relied upon.
- 7.17 Do not contact any UK SBS staff or the Contracting Authority staff without the Buyers written permission or we may reject your Bid.
- 7.18 Do not collude to fix or adjust the price or withdraw your Bid with another Party as we will reject your Bid.
- 7.19 Do not offer UK SBS or the Contracting Authority staff any inducement or we will reject your Bid.
- 7.20 Do not seek changes to the Bid after responses have been submitted and the deadline for Bids to be submitted has passed.
- 7.21 Do not cross reference answers to external websites or other parts of your Bid, the cross references and website links will not be considered.
- 7.22 Do not exceed word counts, the additional words will not be considered.
- 7.23 Do not make your Bid conditional on acceptance of your own Terms of Contract, as your Bid will be rejected.
- 7.24 Do not unless explicitly requested by the Contracting Authority either in the procurement documents or via a formal clarification from the Contracting Authority send your response by any way other than via the Jaggaer eSourcing portal. Responses received by any other method than requested will not be considered for the opportunity.

## Some additional guidance notes

- 7.25 All enquiries with respect to access to the eSourcing portal and problems with functionality within the portal must be submitted to Jaggaer eSourcing Helpdesk

**Phone** 08000 698 632

**Email** [customersupport@jaggaer.com](mailto:customersupport@jaggaer.com)

**Call me back**

Please note; Jaggaer is a free self-registration portal. Bidders can complete the online registration at the following link:

<https://beisgroup.ukp.app.jaggaer.com/>

- 7.26 Bidders will be specifically advised where attachments are permissible to support a question response within the eSourcing portal. Where they are not permissible any attachments submitted will not be considered as part of the evaluation process.
- 7.27 Question numbering is not sequential and all questions which require submission are included in the Section 6 Evaluation Response Questionnaire.
- 7.28 Any Contract offered may not guarantee any volume of work or any exclusivity of supply.
- 7.29 We do not guarantee to award any Contract as a result of this procurement
- 7.30 All documents issued or received in relation to this procurement shall be the property of the Contracting Authority / UK SBS.
- 7.31 We can amend any part of the procurement documents at any time prior to the latest date / time Bids shall be submitted through the Jaggaer eSourcing Portal.
- 7.32 If you are a Consortium you must provide details of the Consortiums structure.
- 7.33 Bidders will be expected to comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, or your Bid will be rejected.
- 7.34 Bidders should note the Government's transparency agenda requires your Bid and any Contract entered into to be published on a designated, publicly searchable web site. By submitting a response to this ITQ Bidders are agreeing that their Bid and Contract may be made public
- 7.35 Your bid will be valid for 90 days or your Bid will be rejected.
- 7.36 Bidders may only amend the contract terms during the clarification period only, only if you can demonstrate there is a legal or statutory reason why you cannot accept them. If you request changes to the Contract terms without such grounds and the Contracting Authority fail to accept your legal or statutory reason is reasonably justified, we may reject your Bid.
- 7.37 We will let you know the outcome of your Bid evaluation and where requested will provide a written debrief of the relative strengths and weaknesses of your Bid.

- 7.38 If you fail mandatory pass / fail criteria we will reject your Bid.
- 7.39 Bidders are required to use IE8, IE9, Chrome or Firefox in order to access the functionality of the Jaggaer eSourcing Portal.
- 7.40 Bidders should note that if they are successful with their proposal the Contracting Authority reserves the right to ask additional compliance checks prior to the award of any Contract. In the event of a Bidder failing to meet one of the compliance checks the Contracting Authority may decline to proceed with the award of the Contract to the successful Bidder.
- 7.41 All timescales are set using a 24-hour clock and are based on British Summer Time or Greenwich Mean Time, depending on which applies at the point when Date and Time Bids shall be submitted through the Jaggaer eSourcing Portal.
- 7.42 All Central Government Departments and their Executive Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies are subject to control and reporting within Government. In particular, they report to the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury for all expenditure. Further, the Cabinet Office has a cross-Government role delivering overall Government policy on public procurement - including ensuring value for money and related aspects of good procurement practice.

For these purposes, the Contracting Authority may disclose within Government any of the Bidders documentation/information (including any that the Bidder considers to be confidential and/or commercially sensitive such as specific bid information) submitted by the Bidder to the Contracting Authority during this Procurement. The information will not be disclosed outside Government. Bidders taking part in this ITQ consent to these terms as part of the competition process.

- 7.43 The Government revised its Government Security Classifications (GSC) classification scheme on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014 to replace the previous Government Protective Marking System (GPMS). A key aspect of this is the reduction in the number of security classifications used. All Bidders are encouraged to make themselves aware of the changes and identify any potential impacts in their Bid, as the protective marking and applicable protection of any material passed to, or generated by, you during the procurement process or pursuant to any Contract awarded to you as a result of this tender process will be subject to the new GSC. The link below to the Gov.uk website provides information on the new GSC:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-security-classifications>

The Contracting Authority reserves the right to amend any security related term or condition of the draft contract accompanying this ITQ to reflect any changes introduced by the GSC. In particular where this ITQ is accompanied by any instructions on safeguarding classified information (e.g. a Security Aspects Letter) as a result of any changes stemming from the new GSC, whether in respect of the applicable protective marking scheme, specific protective markings given, the aspects to which any protective marking applies or otherwise. This may relate to the instructions on safeguarding classified information (e.g. a Security Aspects Letter) as they apply to the procurement as they apply to the procurement process and/or any contracts awarded to you as a result of the procurement process.

#### **USEFUL INFORMATION LINKS**

- [Contracts Finder](#)
- [Equalities Act introduction](#)

- [Bribery Act introduction](#)
- [Freedom of information Act](#)

## **8.0 Freedom of information**

- 8.1 In accordance with the obligations and duties placed upon public authorities by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the 'FoIA') and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (the 'EIR') (each as amended from time to time), UK SBS or the Contracting Authority may be required to disclose information submitted by the Bidder to the to the Contracting Authority.
- 8.2 In respect of any information submitted by a Bidder that it considers to be commercially sensitive the Bidder should complete the Freedom of Information declaration question defined in the Question FOI1.2.
- 8.3 Where a Bidder identifies information as commercially sensitive, the Contracting Authority will endeavour to maintain confidentiality. Bidders should note, however, that, even where information is identified as commercially sensitive, the Contracting Authority may be required to disclose such information in accordance with the FoIA or the Environmental Information Regulations. In particular, the Contracting Authority is required to form an independent judgment concerning whether the information is exempt from disclosure under the FoIA or the EIR and whether the public interest favours disclosure or not. Accordingly, the Contracting Authority cannot guarantee that any information marked 'confidential' or "commercially sensitive" will not be disclosed.
- 8.4 Where a Bidder receives a request for information under the FoIA or the EIR during the procurement, this should be immediately passed on to UK SBS or the Contracting Authority and the Bidder should not attempt to answer the request without first consulting with the Contracting Authority.
- 8.5 Bidders are reminded that the Government's transparency agenda requires that sourcing documents, including ITQ templates such as this, are published on a designated, publicly searchable web site, and, that the same applies to other sourcing documents issued by UK SBS or the Contracting Authority, and any contract entered into by the Contracting Authority with its preferred supplier once the procurement is complete. By submitting a response to this ITQ Bidders are agreeing that their participation and contents of their Response may be made public.

## **9.0. Timescales**

- 9.1 [Section 3](#) of the ITQ sets out the proposed procurement timetable. The Contracting Authority reserves the right to extend the dates and will advise potential Bidders of any change to the dates.

## **10.0. The Contracting Authority's Contact Details**

- 10.1 Unless stated otherwise in these Instructions or in writing from UK SBS or the Contracting Authority, all communications from Bidders (including their sub-contractors, consortium members, consultants, and advisers) during the period of this procurement must be directed through the eSourcing tool to the designated UK SBS contact.

- 10.2 Bidders should be mindful that the designated Contact should not under any circumstances be sent a copy of their Response outside of the Jaggaer eSourcing portal. Failure to follow this requirement will result in disqualification of the Response.

## Appendix A – Glossary of Terms

TERM	MEANING
“UK SBS”	means UK Shared Business Services Ltd herein after referred to as UK SBS.
“Bid”, “Response”, “Submitted Bid”, or “ITQ Response”	means the Bidders formal offer in response to this Invitation to Quote
“Bidder(s)”	means the organisations being invited to respond to this Invitation to Quote
“Central Purchasing Body”	means a duly constituted public sector organisation which procures supplies / services / works for and on behalf of Contracting Authorities
“Conditions of Bid”	means the terms and conditions set out in this ITQ relating to the submission of a Bid
“Contract”	means the agreement to be entered by the Contracting Authority and the Supplier following any award under the procurement
“Contracting Bodies”	means the Contracting Authority and any other contracting authorities described in the <a href="#">Contracts Finder Contract Notice</a> ]
“Contracting Authority”	A public body regulated under the Public Procurement Regulations on whose behalf the procurement is being run
“Customer”	means the legal entity (or entities) for which any Contract agreed will be made accessible to.
“Due Diligence Information”	means the background and supporting documents and information provided by the Contracting Authority for the purpose of better informing the Bidders responses to this ITQ
“EIR”	mean the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 together with any guidance and / or codes of practice issued by the Information Commissioner or relevant Government department in relation to such regulations
“FoIA”	means the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and any subordinate legislation made under such Act from time to time together with any guidance and/or codes of practice issued by the Information Commissioner or relevant Government department in relation to such legislation
“Invitation to Quote” or “ITQ”	means this Invitation to Quote documentation and all related documents published by the Contracting Authority and made available to Bidders and includes the Due Diligence Information. <b>NOTE:</b> This document is often referred to as an Invitation to Tender within other organisations
“Mandatory”	Means a pass / fail criteria which must be met in order for a Bid to be considered, unless otherwise specified.
“Named Procurement person ”	means the single point of contact for the Contracting Authority based in UK SBS that will be dealing with the procurement
“Order”	means an order for served by any Contracting Body on the Supplier
“Other Public Bodies” or “OPB”	means all Contracting Bodies except the Contracting Authority
“Supplier(s)”	means the organisation(s) awarded the Contract
“Supplies / Services / Works”	means any supplies/services and supplies or works set out at within <a href="#">Section 4</a> Specification