



## **Guidance note for NEET procurement: December 2015.**

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) is providing a technical procurement service, this guidance note provides you with advice on how to make your application **but not what to put in it.**

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **PUBLIC CONTRACT REGULATIONS 2015**

As central government agency, the SFA is subject to the Public Contract Regulations 2015 which were introduced in February of this year.

All procurement must be carried out in accordance with the key principles of transparency and equal treatment of candidates. The SFA publishes with the Invitation to Tender, all the documentation as required by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Therefore all candidates

- Have access to exactly the same information
- Can consider if they wish to submit a bid.

Under EU regulations, there are a number of different procedures that we can use to procure. For this procurement, we are using a restricted procedure which involves a pre-qualification process followed by the invitation to tender. We do this to ensure that we only invite those candidates that have the capacity and capability to deliver the specification requirements to tender. It also means that potential candidates do not waste resources in preparing a bid for which they would be considered not to have the capacity or capability to deliver.

#### **WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED?**

You have passed the most recent Register of Training Organisations (Register) refresh, results were published in September 2015.

Candidates were invited into the NEET tenders dependent on what options they selected from the LEP areas and the programmes they wished to deliver:

- 16-18 apprenticeships
- 19-23 apprenticeships
- Traineeships
- Skills for Life
- Pre-employment training
- Community Learning
- ESOL
- Skills support for the unemployed.



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## **READ ME FIRST**

This provides information on:

- who is eligible to apply to the Invitation to Tender
- How to contact the SFA
- Circumstances when a candidate would not be awarded a contract
- Criteria against which candidate response will be evaluated
- How scores will be awarded
- A timetable detailing the steps of the procurement process
- Contract award information.

## **BRAVO**

The SFA uses Bravo to publish all PQQ and ITTs. It is managed on our behalf and therefore, whilst we can help in some circumstances, we cannot give technical advice on how to manage your account.

All queries must come via the Bravo message board – this provides a full audit trail and consistent answer for both the candidate and the SFA. We cannot be responsible for an answer from another source.

We aim to respond to all messages within 48 hours, however this is dependent on the volume of messages we receive. We advise you to submit your query as soon as possible as may not be able to respond to all queries as we approach the closing date'.

Any late publications are not considered UNLESS it is found that there is a technical reason with Bravo Solutions – Bravo would inform us immediately of any such situation.

## **WHAT CANDIDATES ARE EXPECTED TO DO?**

Answer the question relating to the LEP area you are applying for.

Read all the documents particularly the instructions as these are there to help you.

We will not evaluate non-compliant responses and this includes responses submitted after the deadline. ITT's will still be open at 16:59 but not 17:01.

Answer the question in the relevant space and use the available character space to answer a question.

Check and recheck your submission – Bravo will even remind you to do this.

Read all the information available.

Use the message board facility.



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If you use a bid writer ensure they understand the ethos of your organisation and you submit the bid not them.

Do substantiate statements with examples.

Do not cross reference information in other answers. We will only look at the information contained in the response to a question.

Ensure you submit a compliant bid. A compliant bid meets the requirements in the Read me First document and the following are uploaded:

- Completed questionnaire template
- Deliverables toolkit
- Subcontracting declaration.

All need to be uploaded in the correct space in Bravo within the Technical Envelope.

We recommend you do not leave submitting your response to the last minute.

If you have the slightest concern, use the message board and ask us. If it is a technical problem in the first instance access the online help documents or email [helpdesk@bravosolution.co.uk](mailto:helpdesk@bravosolution.co.uk).

### **WHAT CANDIDATES MUST NOT DO**

Canvas help, assistance or opinion on the Invitation to Tender (ITT) or the procurement process in general from any SFA employee, LEP, other Government Departments, Agency or NDPB other than through the e-Tendering portal message board.

Don't make assumptions we "know you".

At the end of the timeline submit a partially completed ITT as this will not be evaluated.

Submit a response after the closing date and time. Any ITT submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

### **EVALUATION**

In line with the SFA's robust, tried and tested procurement processes we use a system of 2 independent evaluators and provide a moderation service should we find any discrepancies in the scoring and to also ensure fairness and transparency.

The scoring criteria can be found in the Read Me First document.

Contract award will be made on basis of highest score.



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Complaints about the process, not the outcome, should be by using the SFA complaints procedure on [www.Gov.uk](http://www.Gov.uk).

### **AWARD DECISION NOTICES**

The SFA provides robust feedback which includes information on the successful bid in those areas where the unsuccessful candidate has scored less than the winner.

The mandatory standstill period is 10 calendar days and is there to give unsuccessful tenderers the opportunity to challenge the result of the tender exercise. Any challenge/complaint may mean we have to extend the standstill period. The only premise on which to challenge would be that a tenderer feels that it has been unfairly treated in the process.

Contracts can only be issued once the standstill period has expired.

### **USEFUL LINKS**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sfa-funding-rates>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sfa-register-of-training-organisation>

<https://skillsfundingagency.bravosolution.co.uk/web/login.shtml>