Crown Commercial Service

eSourcing Suite - Supplier Guidance

Part B - Tendering and Further Competitions

Version 1.11 (16/09/2015)

Date	Version	Change Summary
19/08/2015	1.10	Page 8 - New login screen image due to revised labelling of links.
24/11/2015	1.11	Amendment to text in Para 2.1 Amendment to titles of Paras 8.3, 8.4, 8.5 Amendment to text in Para 12.1.1

1. Introduction

1.1. This document provides guidance to suppliers about Crown Commercial Service's eSourcing Suite. It specifically addresses how to participate in tendering events, including customers' Further Competitions. Guidance on how to register organisations and users for the eSourcing Suite is provided in a separate guidance document.

1.2. The eSourcing Suite is an online system providing a wide range of eSourcing functionality for Crown Commercial Service, our customers and our suppliers. The eSourcing Suite supports end-to-end procurement activity including: early-market engagement, issuing Invitations to Tender, online evaluation, eAuctions, and post-award contract and supplier management. Access to the eSourcing Suite is available to registered organisations using the link:

https://gpsesourcing.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sso/jsp/login.jsp

1.3. Please note that this guidance is for *suppliers* or *potential suppliers* to government. If you wish to register a public sector organisation as a *customer* of Crown Commercial Service and use the eSourcing Suite, please contact our Service Desk on 0345 410 2222. Customer guidance can be found on the Crown Commercial Service portal. Suppliers requiring system support should call the eEnablement team via our Service Desk on 0345 010 3503.

2. Overview of the eSourcing Suite

2.1. Crown Commercial Service's eSourcing Suite is used to support a variety of different procurement types:

- OJEU procurements run by Crown Commercial Service. These are typically run under the 'Open' Procedure, but occasionally use the 'Restricted' or 'Competitive Dialogue' Procedure.

- 'Further competitions' run between suppliers on existing Framework Agreements, either by Crown Commercial Service or by its public sector customers.

- More complex low-value (sub OJEU-threshold) procurements – although simpler low-value procurements may also be run under the separate Dynamic Marketplace (RFQ) system where there is no technical evaluation.

- Electronic Auctions – as part of either an OJEU procurement, or a further competition managed by Crown Commercial Service. Crown Commercial Service's customers will not typically run auctions as part of their further competitions.

2.2. The eSourcing Suite system uses the term RFx ('Request For....'), as the generic term for a procurement event.

2.3. An Invitation to Tender (ITT) is issued by Crown Commercial Service, to invite suppliers to submit a tender for a specific procurement.

2.4. If the procurement is following the 'Open Procedure', a supplier will make a single submission – their tender – in response to the ITT.

2.5. If the procurement is following the 'Restricted Procedure', a supplier will first complete a PQQ (Pre-Qualification Questionnaire). Crown Commercial Service will evaluate suppliers' PQQ responses, and then the ITT will be issued to a short-list of suppliers.

2.6. To participate successfully in a procurement event via the eSourcing Suite, there are a number of steps to be followed:

- Registering for use of the eSourcing suite – register your organisation for access to the eSourcing Suite by accessing the Crown Commercial Service portal, https://gpsesourcing.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sso/jsp/login.jsp . Click the register now on the "*Register for CCS eSourcing"* link.

- Expressing an Interest – to notify Crown Commercial Service that your organisation wishes to be invited to participate in a specific procurement. This

allows you visibility of the procurement after you are registered. Registration alone does not provide visibility of the procurement.

- Reading the documentation attached to the procurement – This will include guidance.

- Sending or receiving messages. During an RFx, suppliers may send messages to Crown Commercial Service (such as to ask clarification questions). Suppliers might also receive messages from Crown Commercial Service, informing them of issues or developments. This should be done from within an open procurement as outlined in the messaging section (10) of this document.

- Accepting or declining an RFx invitation.   Suppliers are strongly recommended to review the RFx attachments, questions and bid fields before accepting or declining an RFx invitation.

- Responding to the RFx – completing questions and/or bidding prices; and uploading any required attachments.

- Submitting your bid. Once you are satisfied with your submission for a tender or further competition **you MUST press the [Submit all Draft Bids]** button**. All bids are in draft form until this is completed, and are not visible to Crown Commercial Service as they have not been submitted.

- Reporting. During or after an RFx, there are a variety of summary reports that suppliers can run. Reports can be downloaded and saved.

2.7. Specific information on customers' Further Competitions, and how to participate in them, is included in Section 12 of this guidance.

3. Technical Requirements

3.1. The eSourcing Suite is accessed over the internet and should operate using any standard web-browser. Users of Internet Explorer should use IE6 SP3 or a later version.

3.2. To use the eSourcing Suite successfully, pop-up blockers on your web-browser will need to be disabled for this site. You may also wish to set the eSourcing Suite as a 'Trusted Site' on your browser.

3.3. Emails sent to supplier from the eSourcing Suite will come from the address eSourcing@ccs.cabinetoffice.gov.uk. Please ensure that you have any email filters enabled, that will allow you to receive emails from this particular address.

3.4. It is recommended that suppliers using the eSourcing Suite regularly clear the 'cache' on their browser, including for existing cookies.

4. Expressing Interest in a Procurement

4.1. In keeping with European procurement Directives, whenever Crown Commercial Service initiates a procurement for a new contract (of financial value above certain thresholds), the opportunity is first advertised via a Contract Notice in the Official Journal (OJEU).

4.2. Prospective suppliers can identify opportunities to participate in these Crown Commercial Service procurements in a variety of ways, including:

- Tenders Electronic Daily (TED)

- Contracts Finder

- The Crown Commercial Service website

4.3. As explained in each relevant OJEU Contract Notice, a supplier should express an interest in a specific procurement by emailing Crown Commercial Service at ExpressionOfInterest@crowncommercial.gov.uk detailing your organisation name, and the name of the procurement you wish to participate. Note that a supplier must be registered as an organisation on the eSourcing Suite before an Expression of Interest can be accepted.

4.4. Crown Commercial Service will process the Expression of Interest email and – if the supplier is registered on the eSourcing Suite – then invite the supplier to participate in the procurement event. The relevant user will receive an email notifying them of this invitation.

4.5. Further Competitions are launched by customers. Suppliers who have won a place on a framework lot are automatically invited. Suppliers will automatically receive email notification to the relevant email address. Detailed information on Further Competitions is found in Section 12 of this guidance.

5. Logging on to the eSourcing Suite

5.1. To log on, go to the eSourcing Suite front-page at https://gpsesourcing.cabinetoffice.gov.uk.

5.2. Enter your <u>User Name</u> in the Name Box, and your password.

5.3. If you have forgotten your User Name or your password, click on the "Forgot..." links and follow the onscreen instructions.

5.4. The first time that you log on, you will be prompted to change your temporary password; and to provide the answer to a password reset question. Please note that your new password must be at least eight characters long, and consist of both upper and lower case letters, and a mixture of letters, numbers and non-alphanumeric characters.

5.5. The first screen you will see once you have logged-on is the User Agreement, governing the access and use of the eSourcing Suite. Suppliers must accept this agreement every time that they wish to use the eSourcing Suite. Click on 'I Agree' to proceed.

5.6. Your initial landing page once logged on is the 'Bids – View RFx(s)' page. This Home Page can be accessed at any time by clicking on the 'Home' icon. Similarly, you can log-out at any time using the 'Logout' icon.
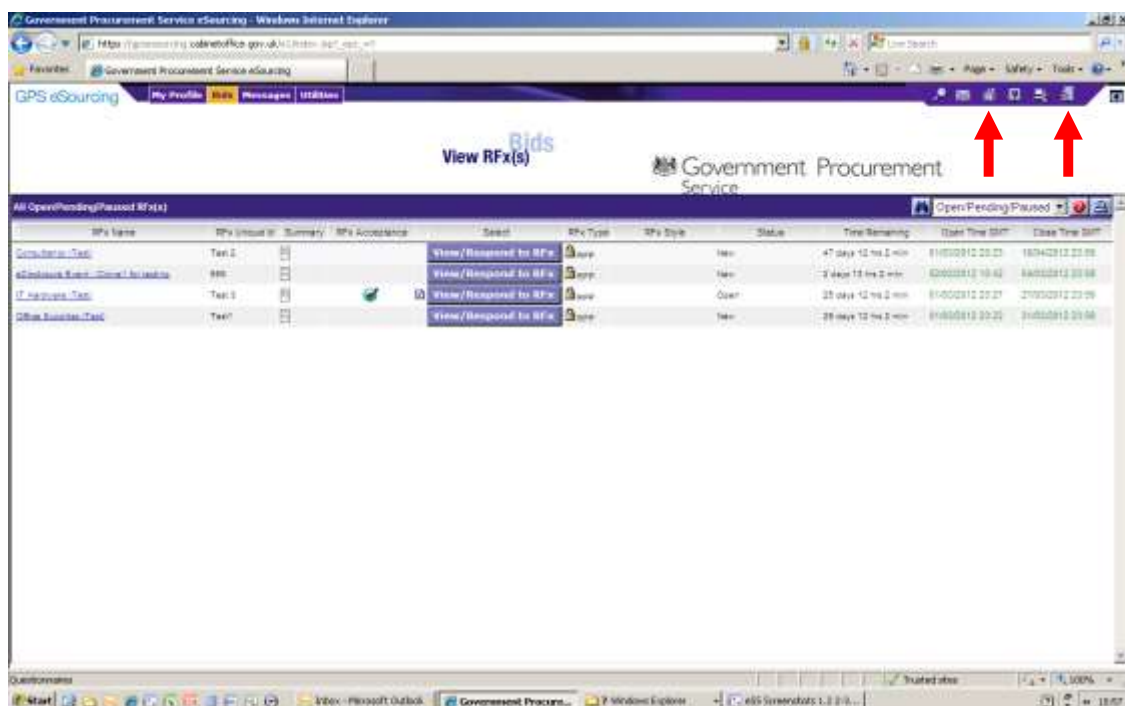
# 6. Help and guidance.

6.1. The eSourcing Suite contains online help. Due to the generic nature of the online help, we recommend you use this guide, which outlines the specific steps for a Crown Commercial Service response and is written to enable a response using our processes.
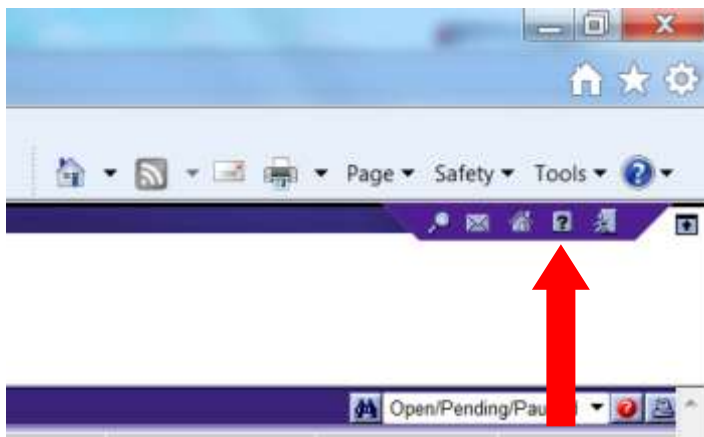
7. Accepting or Declining an RFx Invitation

7.1. By default, when you first log on to the eSourcing Suite, it will show the 'Bids – View RFx(s)' page. If you do not see this page, click on the 'Home' icon (or on 'Bids' then 'View RFx(s)' on the top menu bar).

7.2. The home-page will display any current procurements (RFx) that your organisation has been invited to, including information such as the name, type, status and event timing. The drop-down box can be used to filter RFx(s) to show the open, pending, paused, closed and/or awarded events. If there are no such events the comment will show 'NO DATA AVAILABLE'.
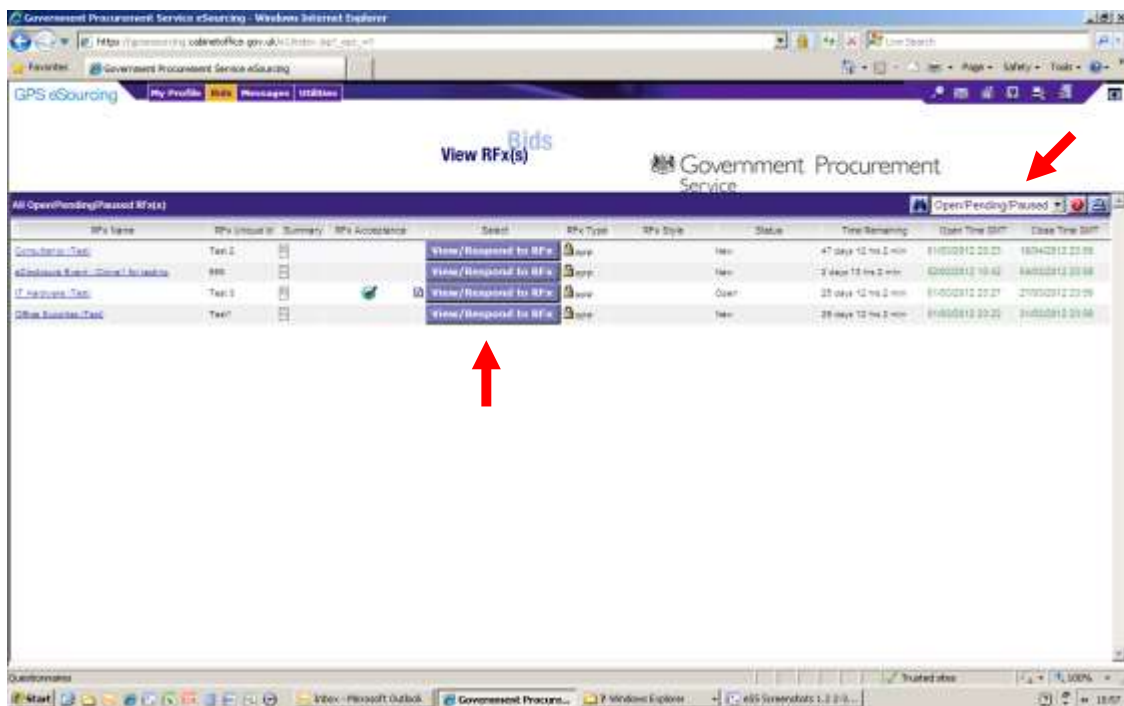

7.3. To review a specific RFx, click on the 'View/Respond to RFx' button for that event.

7.4. The page that follows will show an overview of the RFx that has been opened for response. Prior to accepting the invitation to participate, you should **first carefully review the attached documents**, and then the RFx questions and bid-fields. Information on how open attachments is found in section 9 of this guidance. You will also want to review the messages for the procurement before deciding to proceed. Messaging guidance is in section 10.

7.5. Questionnaires are composed of questions. You can expand the questionnaires (individually with the relevant + box, or collectively with the ↕ icon), to view the component questions in each.
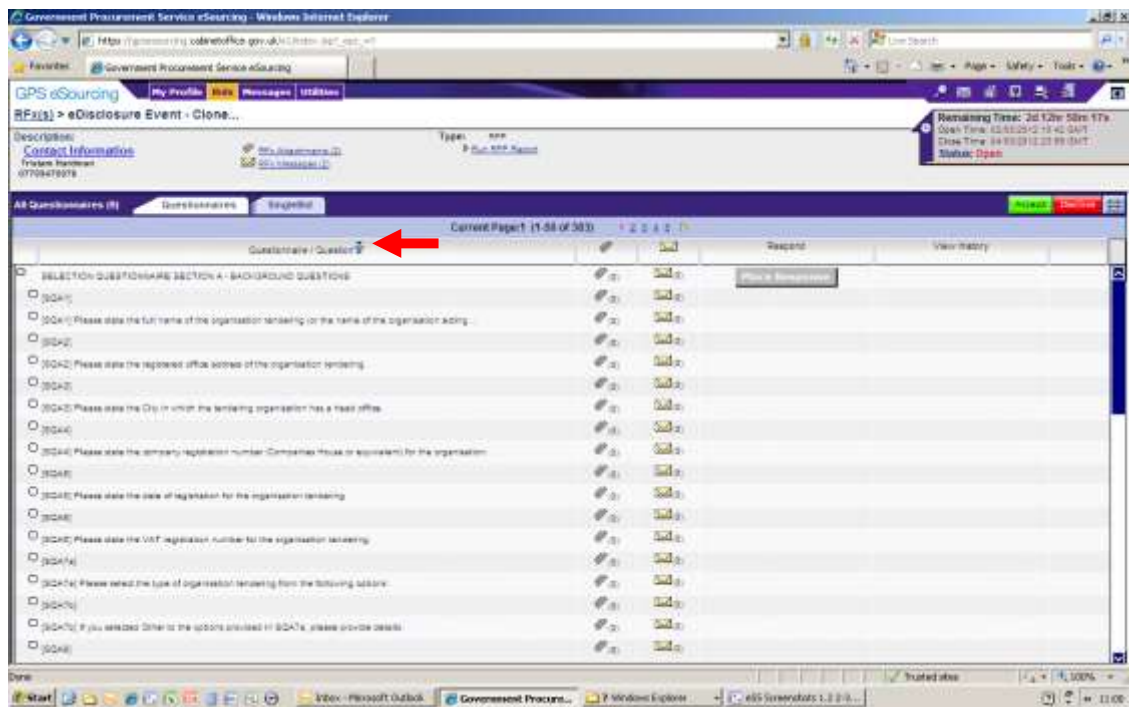
7.6. You can review the RFx items and bid-fields by clicking on the 'SingleBid' tab.
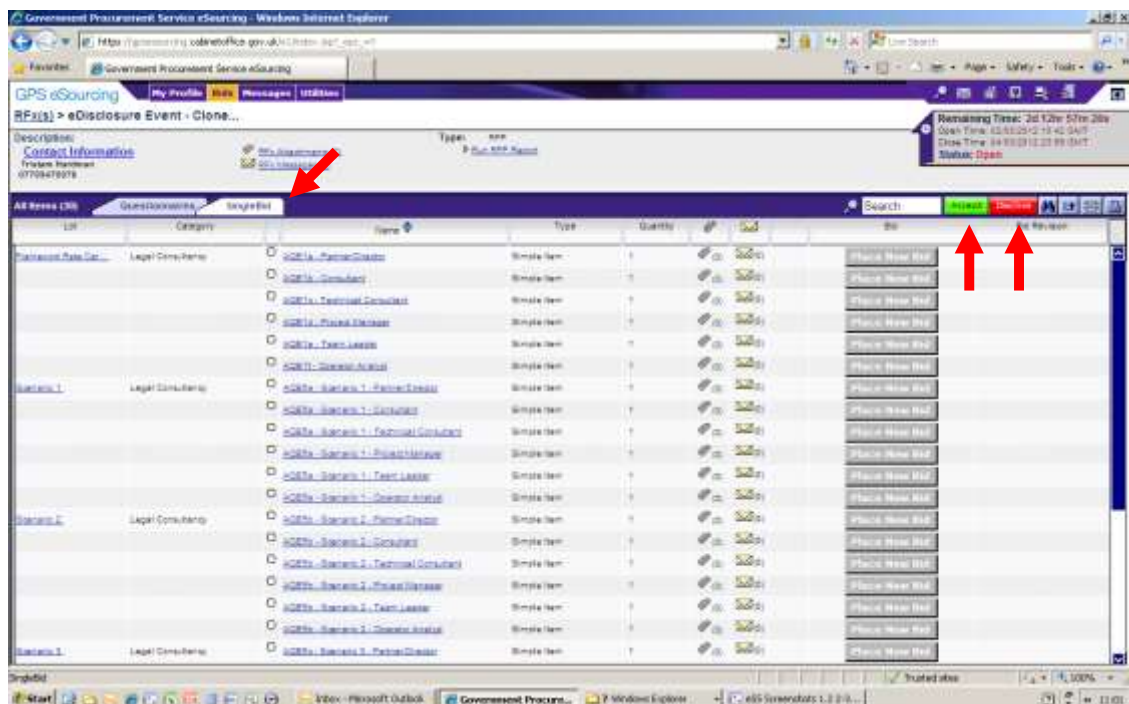
7.7. Having reviewed the attached RFx documentation and the questions and bid fields: if you wish to participate in the procurement, click on the green 'Accept' button. Alternatively, to decline the invitation to participate, click on the red 'Decline' button.

7.8. When you accept an invitation to an RFx, you are doing so on behalf of your organisation. Other users from your organisation users who were also invited to that event will not need to accept the invitation. If you decline you will be prompted for a reason. Crown Commercial Service uses this information to inform future tenders.

7.9. After you accept an invitation to an event, the RFx overview page changes. The 'Place Response' buttons for each questionnaire (previously grey-out) change to red, and a new 'MultiBid' tab appears.

7.10. RFx(s) for which invitations have been accepted show a 'tick' icon in the 'RFx Acceptance' field from your log in screen.
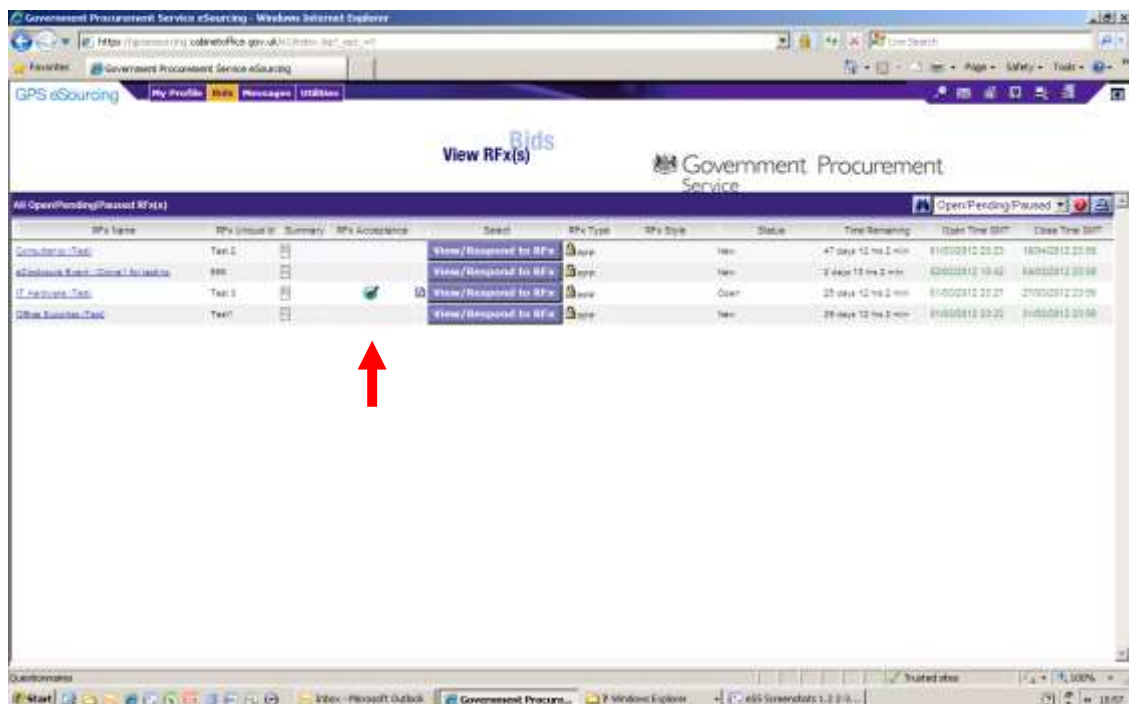
7.11.   If you accept an invitation to an RFx and later decide that you do not wish to submit a tender, you should withdraw from the event (see section 8.8).

7.12.   If you decline an invitation to an event, and then later decide that you do wish to take part, it is possible to change your mind. To do this go to 'Bids → View Invitations'. Click on the 'Declined' tab. Select the right-hand checkbox for the event in question, and then click the 'Accept' button.

8. Responding to an RFx

8.1. Reviewing RFx attachments

8.1.1. Before you can respond to an RFx, you must first accept the invitation to participate (see section 7). As part of this process, suppliers should carefully review the RFx attachments **before** beginning to complete RFx questions or item bid-fields.

8.2.Completing Questions and Questionnaires

8.2.1. To view a specific RFx, click on 'Bids' then 'View RFx(s)' on the top menu-bar. Ensure that you have the filter on the right hand side set appropriately. Selecting ALL in the filter will show all current and previous activity. Click on the 'View/Respond to RFx' button for the relevant RFx.
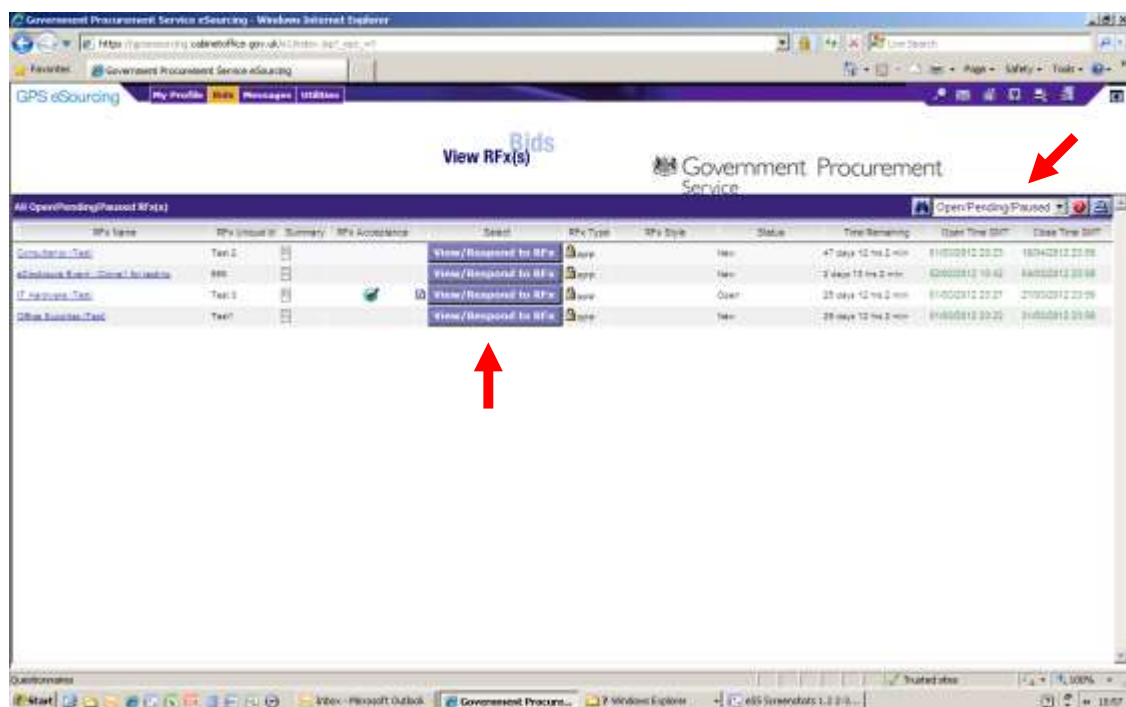
8.2.2. Now click on the Questionnaires tab. Each of the Questionnaires in the RFx will be shown. Initially the 'Respond' field will consist entirely of red 'Place Response' buttons. Click on one of these buttons to open a specific questionnaire.

8.2.3. You should consult the separate Response Guidance Evaluation and Marking Scheme Document (attached as an RFx attachment) for an explanation of the marking-scheme and weighting for each question.


8.2.4. Questions can take a variety of formats, including text, numeric, date, yes/no, drop-down boxes and tables. Mandatory questions are indicated by a red asterisk (*). The response to a questionnaire can only be saved once all the mandatory questions in that questionnaire have been completed.

8.2.5. For some questions, you might be asked to attach a document as part of your tender response. Adding attachments is explained in section 9 of this guidance.

DO NOT attach documents unless explicitly asked to do so in a question.

Information included in unrequested attachments will not be evaluated, and could jeopardise the compliance of your tender.

8.2.6. A questionnaire is completed in the RFX Create Response window. Suppliers should work through each of the component questions in a questionnaire, entering tender responses into the online form. Note that, as individual questionnaires are completed and SAVED, these will change to green 'Revise Response' buttons. The response is held as draft until you press the [Submit all Draft Bids] button. The "DB" icon next to the questionnaire response is the indicator to show which of the responses is still in draft and haven't been submitted. Any response still in draft at the point of closure of the event is NOT SUBMITTED to Crown Commercial Service, and cannot be accessed or viewed as part of a response. The [Submit all Draft Bids] button can be selected at any time after "accepting" the event (until the event closes) and will submit any draft responses or will provide a confirmation message that no responses were found in a draft state.
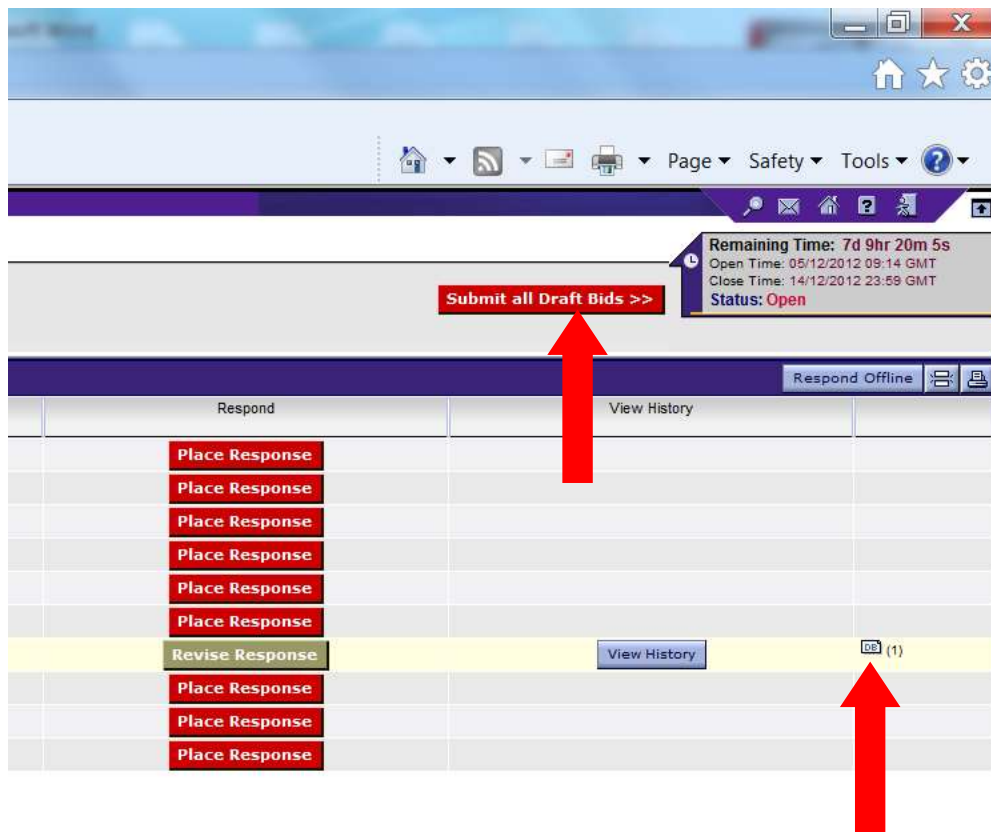
8.2.7. Once you have submitted your bid package, by pressing the [Submit all Draft Bids] button, the system will show a confirmation window. The system will also send an email confirming you have submitted a bid package.
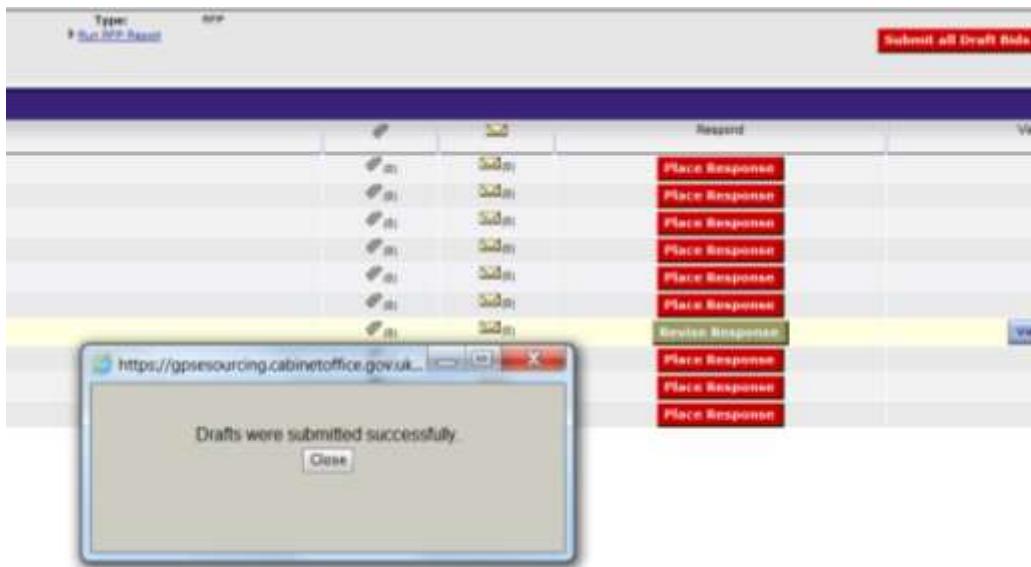
8.2.8. Once successfully submitted the [Submit all Draft Bids] button will be visible until the event closes, the draft bid icon "DB" for a questionnaire will change to a submitted response icon "R".
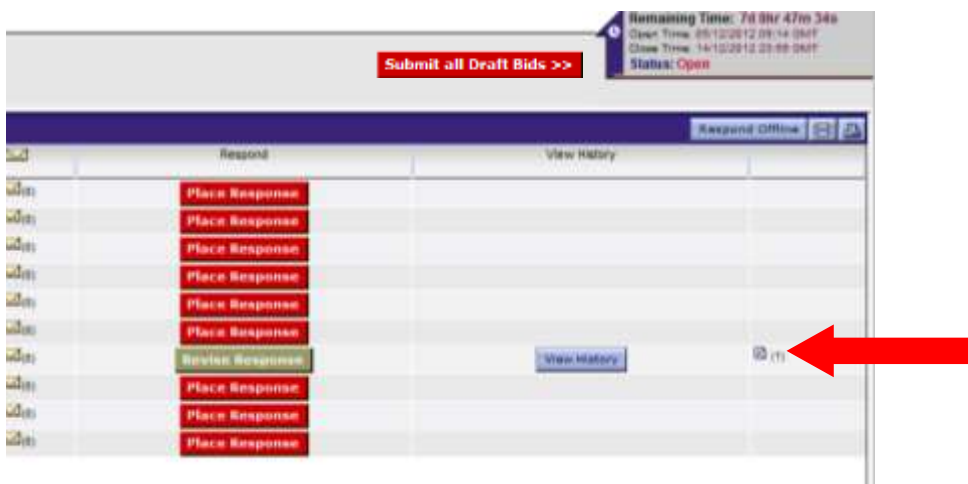
8.2.9. You can change your responses at any time during the open period for the procurement, even after submitting your responses. If you change a bid or questionnaire response, and the "DB" icon re-appears you will need to press the [Submit all Draft Bids] button to submit the changes. You will be able to see which items you have changed as these will be in draft bid status and carry the "DB" icon. Pressing the [Submit all Draft Bids] button will either submit responses found in a draft state or confirm that no draft responses were found.
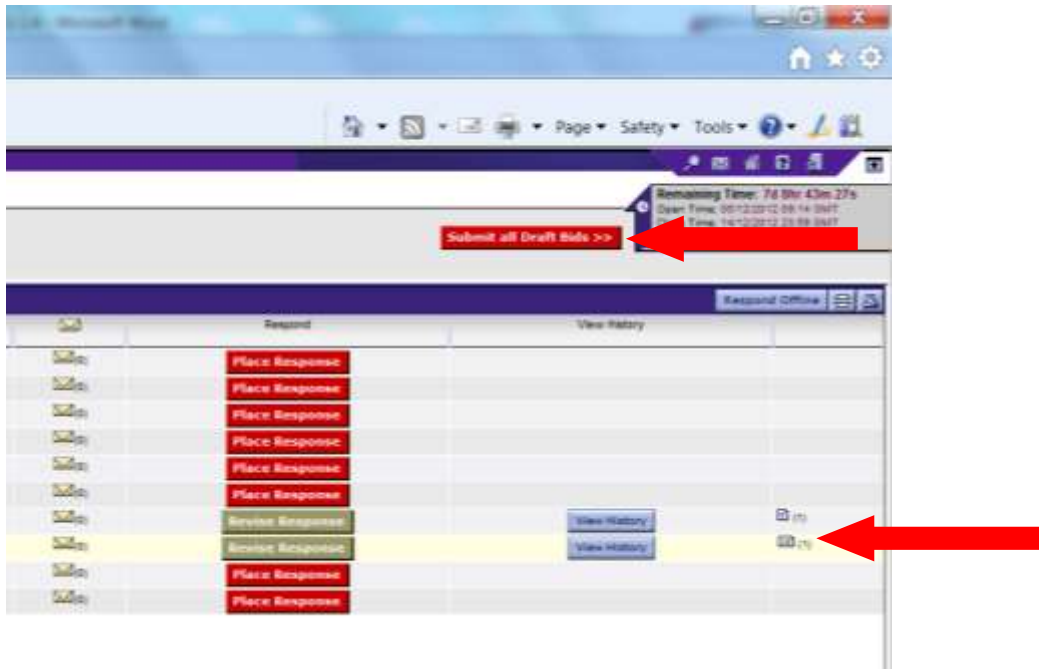
8.2.10. If, whilst completing your RFx response, you have any queries to raise with Crown Commercial Service, this should be done by sending a message via the eSourcing Suite (see section 10.3)

## 8.3. Background to Bids and Bid-fields – *Not applicable to RFI events*

8.3.1. In the eSourcing Suite, pricing information is tendered by submitting bids against 'Items'. The 'SingleBid' page is used to complete bids one item at a time. The 'MultiBid' page is used to enter bids against multiple items at the same time, and can be faster if there a large number of items to bid against. You can choose to use either or both of these approaches when completing the RFx, but please refer to the event guidance a it may suggest you use a specific method.

8.3.2. Related items can be grouped in 'Lots' for bid-evaluation and comparison purposes. It is important to note that these 'item lots' do not necessarily correspond to the 'lots' that a contract (or framework agreement) might be divided into for award purposes.

8.3.3. On the 'SingleBid' page, you can view a list of all the items. The red 'Place New Bid' button is used to place a bid against a specific item (see 8.4 below).


8.3.4. It is important to note that the eSourcing Suite will allow you to place more than one bid against a single item. In most cases this will not be what is required: so **only place more than one bid against an item if explicitly instructed to do so.**

8.3.5. Unlike with questionnaires, the red 'Place New Bid' button does not change colour after a bid has been submitted. However, items that have been bid against show a 'Revise Bid / History' button in the right-adjacent column, and a draft bid icon "DB" on the left-adjacent column. The [Submit all Draft Bids] button will appear. The bid is held as draft until you press the [Submit all Draft Bids] button. The "DB" icon next to the bid is the indicator to show which of the bids is still in draft and haven't been submitted. Any bids still in draft at the point of closure of the event are NOT SUBMITTED to Crown Commercial Service, and cannot be accessed or viewed as part of a response. Once the bids have been submitted, the draft bid icon "DB" will change to a submitted bid icon "B".
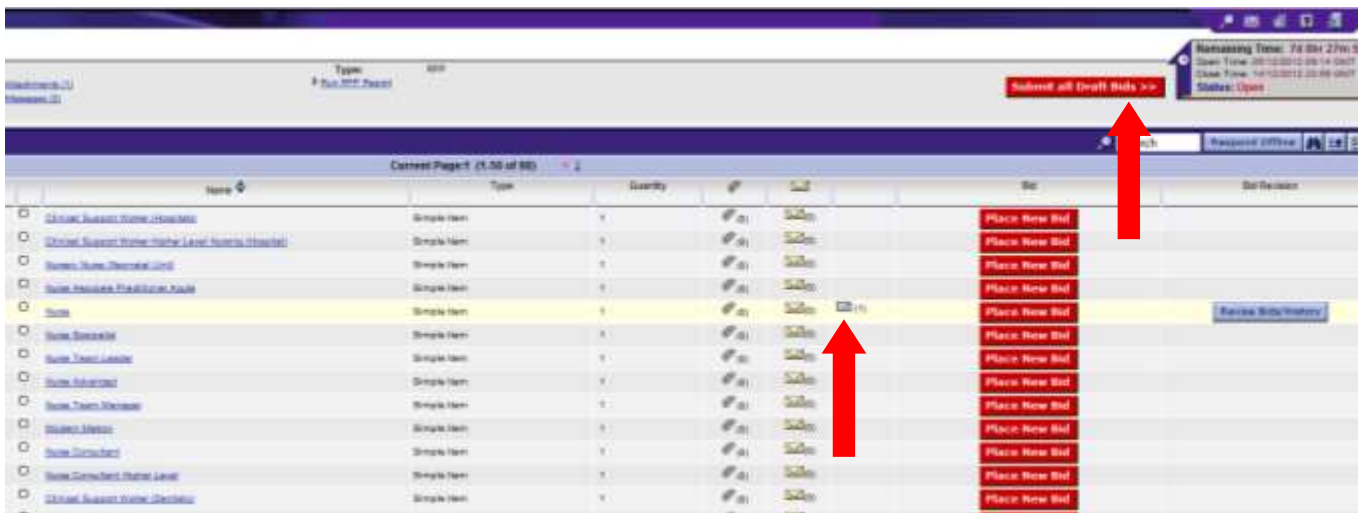
8.3.6. Once the submit button is pressed you will receive a confirmation screen. You will receive an email message to confirm submission. The draft bid icon "DB" against an item will be replaced with a submitted bid icon "B".
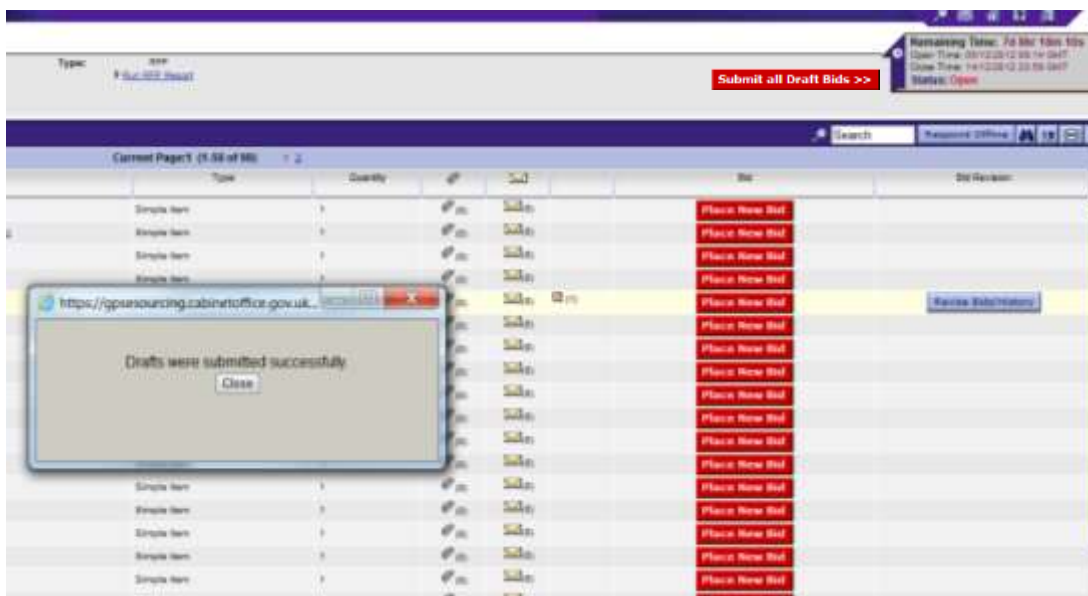
8.3.7. You can revise bids or add new bids up to closure time of the event. If a bid shows with a draft bid icon "DB", you must press the [Submit all Draft Bids] button to submit this bid before the event closes, at which time the icon will change to a submitted icon "B".
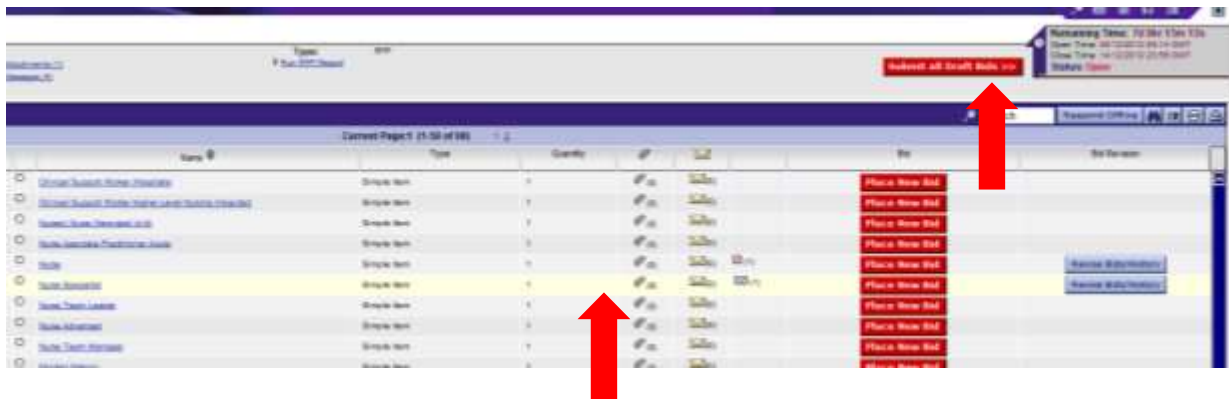
8.3.8. If you do inadvertently submit more than one bid against an item, it is possible to delete the unwanted bid(s). To do this: click on the 'Revise Bids / History' button to open the 'View Bids' page; then select the check-box at the far right for the bid to be deleted, and click the waste-bin icon.

8.4. Entering Bids (Price Information) – Single Bids - *Not applicable to RFI events*

8.4.1. From the 'SingleBid' page, clicking on an item's red 'Place New Bid' button opens a new 'Simple Bid' window. The bid fields required against that item will be shown on a form. Mandatory bid-fields will be marked with an asterisk (*). Bid fields will typically require numeric information, but can also include yes/no, date, tabular and multi-select responses.

8.4.2. You can also edit or delete information that you have previously entered, by re-opening this page and amending your earlier entries.

8.5. Entering Bids (Price Information) – MultiBids - *Not applicable to RFI events*

8.5.1. The 'MultiBid' page shows a large table, that displays all the items and bid-fields in one place. Items are shown in the table rows, and item definition fields in the table columns.

8.5.2. The 'Help Legend' button (found below the MultiBid tab) provides an explanatory list of the symbols and colour-scheme used on this page.

There can be more than one page of Lots/Items

Enter bids into the white bid fields

Bid action can be Create or Edit

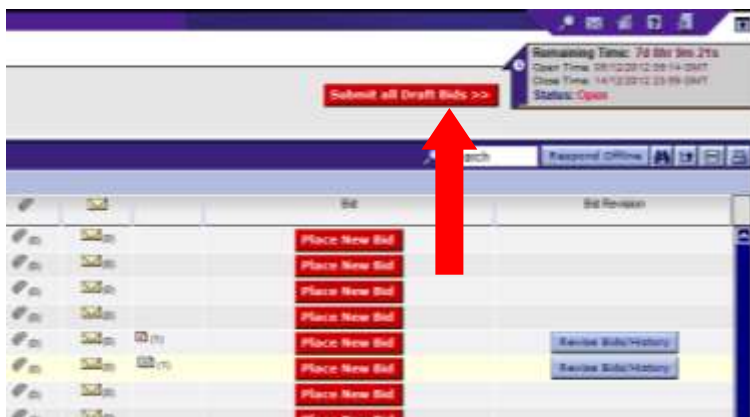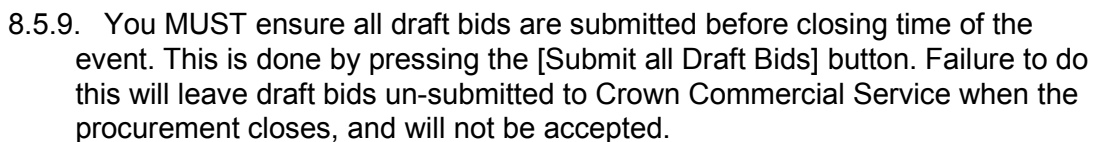Click 'Submit Bids' to confirm new or amended bids

8.5.3. Bid information should be entered into the white bid fields. These will typically require numeric responses but can be other types such as yes/no or multi-select. You will not be permitted to enter information into greyed-out fields.

8.5.4. Not all bid fields are relevant to every item, so different items may require bid fields in different columns to be completed. Once initially completed, bid fields can be amended at any time.

8.5.5. Once entered or amended, bids must be saved by clicking the red 'Submit Bids' button before leaving a multibid page. Bid fields can be completed in any order. Not all items need to be completed before bids can be saved: but any given item cannot be saved if its mandatory fields are only partially completed.

8.5.6. After clicking 'Submit Bids' you will be shown and asked to confirm the added/amended bids, prior to them being saved. A further pop-up window will then confirm that the bids have (or have not) been saved successfully. Once an item's bid fields are completed and saved, the 'Bidding Action' for that action will change from 'Create' to 'Edit'. These are saved DRAFT BIDS and are not

submitted to Crown Commercial Service until the [Submit all Draft Bids] button has been pressed.

8.5.7. You can edit an existing bid by typing a new entry over your earlier entry and then clicking again on the 'Submit Bids' button.

8.5.8. Note that there may be more than one page of Lots/Items to view. You may find it easier to complete the multibid page by viewing individual 'lots' separately, using the drop-down filter.

8.5.9. You MUST ensure all draft bids are submitted before closing time of the event. This is done by pressing the [Submit all Draft Bids] button. Failure to do this will leave draft bids un-submitted to Crown Commercial Service when the procurement closes, and will not be accepted.

8.6. Inviting other Users to Participate in an RFx

8.6.1.   A supplier might have multiple users that can access the eSourcing Suite, each with individually registered, with their own user profiles and log-on details. Supplier users can have one of two roles:

- Supplier Account Manager (SAM); or

- Supplier Agent.

8.6.2.   By default, when Crown Commercial Service receives an Expression of Interest (EOI) from a supplier for a specific event, the following users will be invited to the event:

- the user that submitted the EOI; and

- any (additional) SAM(s) requested by the supplier.

8.6.3.   If a supplier wishes for additional registered users to participate in completing the RFx, these can be added by a SAM. Click on 'Bids' then 'View Invitations' on the top menu-bar.

8.6.4.   The 'View Invitations' page shows the current RFx(s) that a supplier has accepted. Clicking on the yellow folder-icon next to an RFx name shows underneath:

- The questionnaires and the items for that RFx; and

- The users from the supplier currently invited to the event ('Invited Agents').
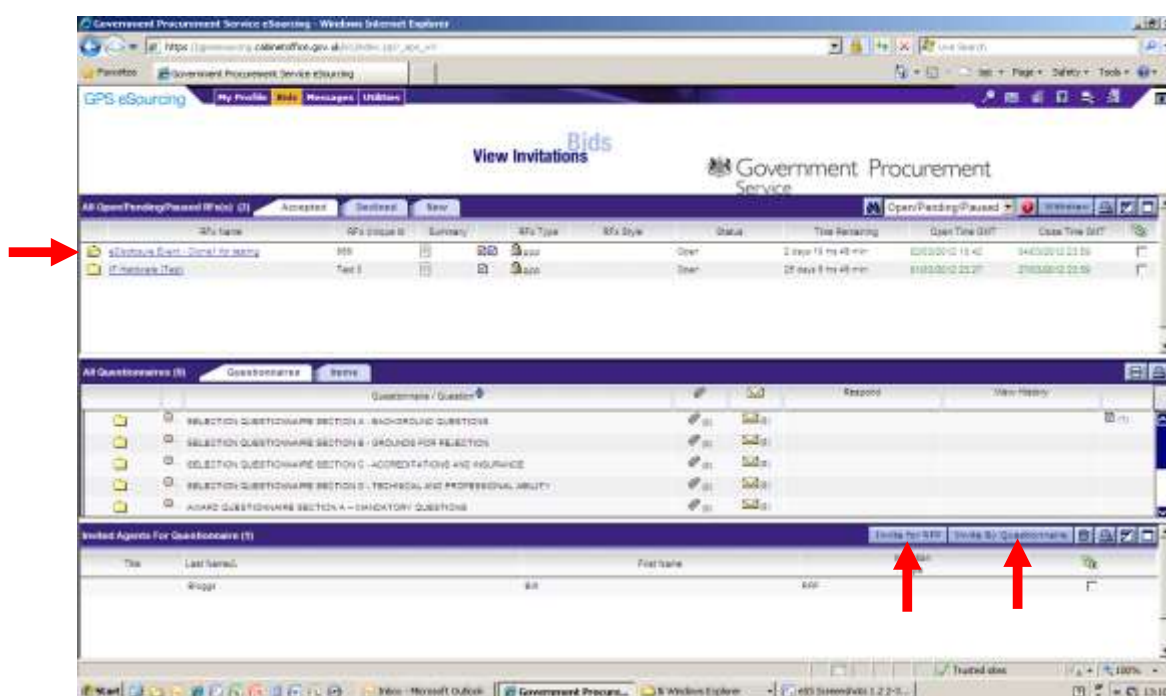
8.6.5.   Additional users can be added for the entire RFx (meaning they can respond to any questionnaire and or item); or they can be added just for specific questionnaires and/or items.

8.6.6.   To add users for the entire RFx, click on the 'Invite for RFx' button. Select the users required (with the check-box on the far right), and then click ''Invite for RFx' again.

8.6.7.   To add users for specific questionnaires only, click on the 'Invite by Questionnaire' button. The following 'Invite Agents for Questionnaire' shows all the questionnaires for that RFx, and the currently uninvited agents.

Click the yellow folder-icon to the left of a specific questionnaire, then select the user(s) required for this questionnaire, and then click the 'Invite by Questionnaire' button.
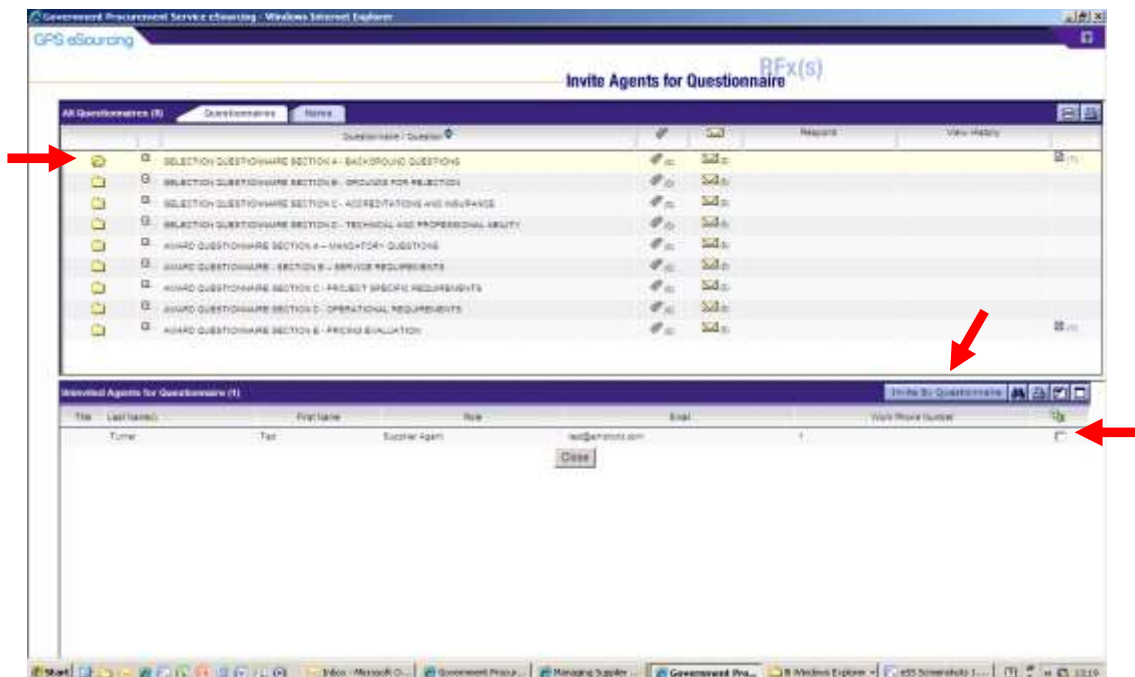
8.6.8. To add users for specific items only, click on 'Invite by Questionnaire' as above, but then open the Items tab. Click the yellow folder-icon to the left of a specific item, then select the user(s) required for this item, and then click the 'Invite for Item' button.
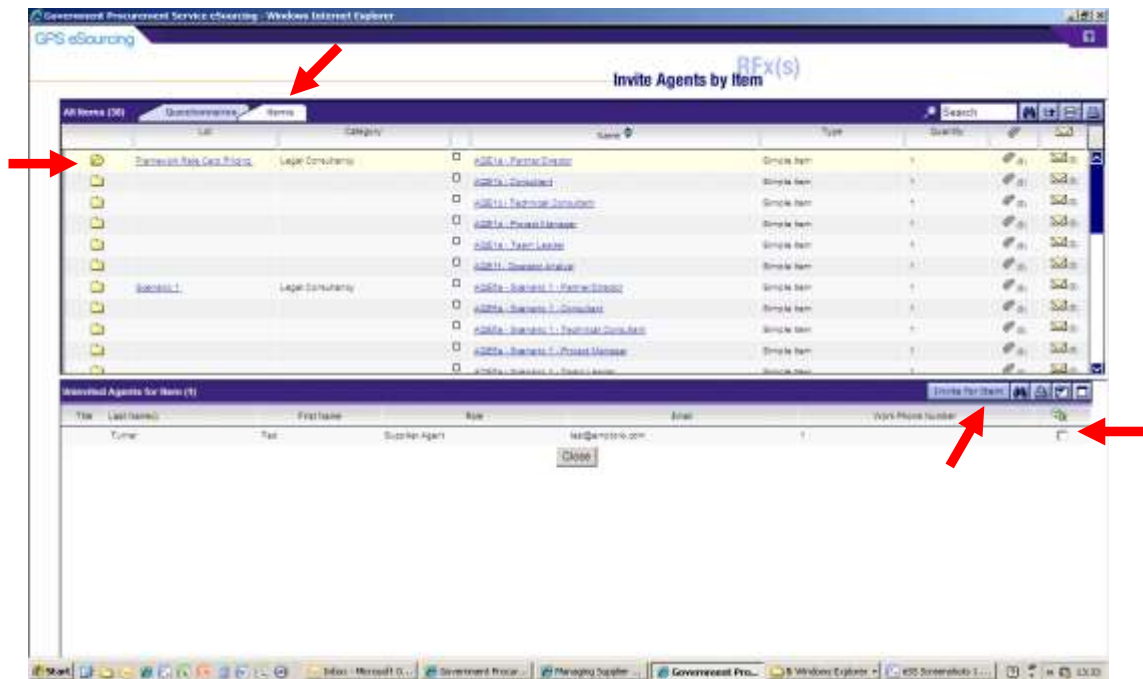

8.6.9. Close this window to return to the 'Bids – View Invitations' page, where the additional users should now be listed as Invited Agents. The Invitation Type field will show whether an individual is invited for the entire RFP, or just specific questionnaires and/or items.

8.7. Responding Offline

8.7.1. The respond offline button will export a blank or partially completed event into excel. It is possible to complete the spreadsheet and upload as an import. Crown Commercial Service strongly recommend you do not use this method to complete a tender. Any mistakes in formatting or entry would cause the import to abort, and as this sheet will contain your bid responses Crown Commercial Service will not be able to accept the sheet to help resolve a technical issue. Sending this sheet in as a response externally or as an attachment will be deemed non compliant.

8.7.2. The export may be useful to collect information, or check a partially or fully completed submission.

8.7.3. To create an offline bidding template, click on the 'Respond Offline' button on an RFx's main page. Select the 'Download offline bidding template' radio-button, and then click OK.
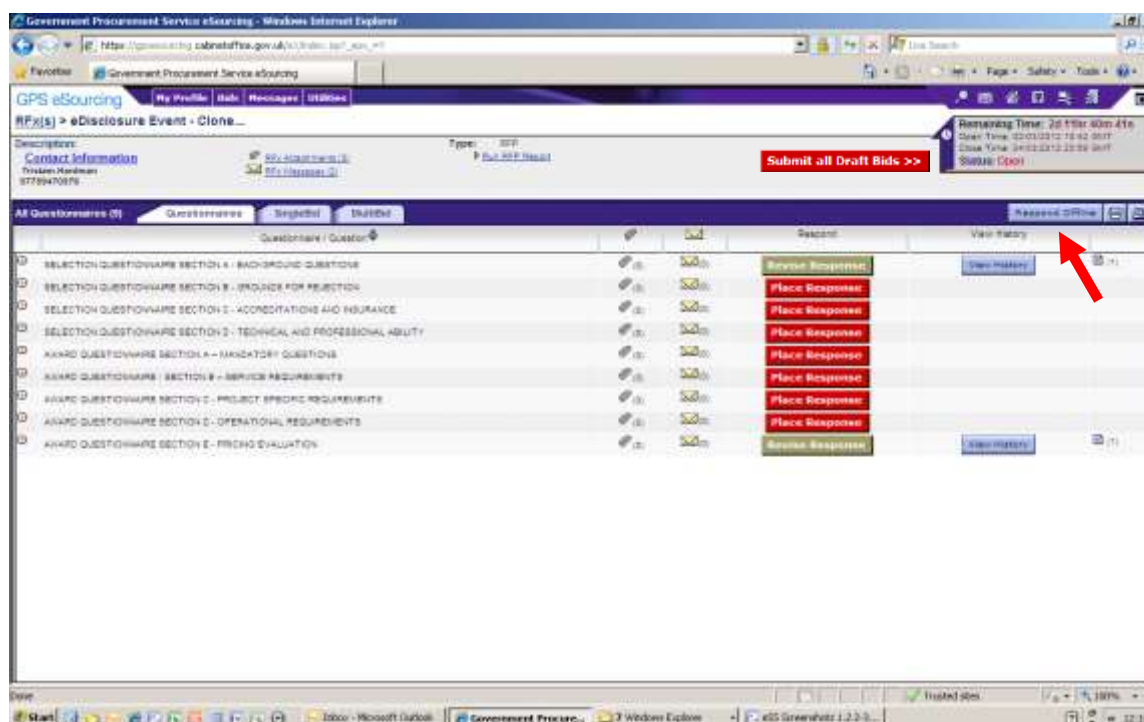

8.7.4. The Export Data page will open. Choose a name for your template (or adopt the suggested name) and the required file format. XLSX is the recommended file format.

8.7.5. The 'Utilities – Data Manager' page will open. Your template download will show as the most recent job. The status of this job will initially be 'Running' but, once completed, will change to 'Done – Click here to download results'

If the download does not appear to be progressing, clicking on the four-arrowed refresh icon will update to the latest job status.
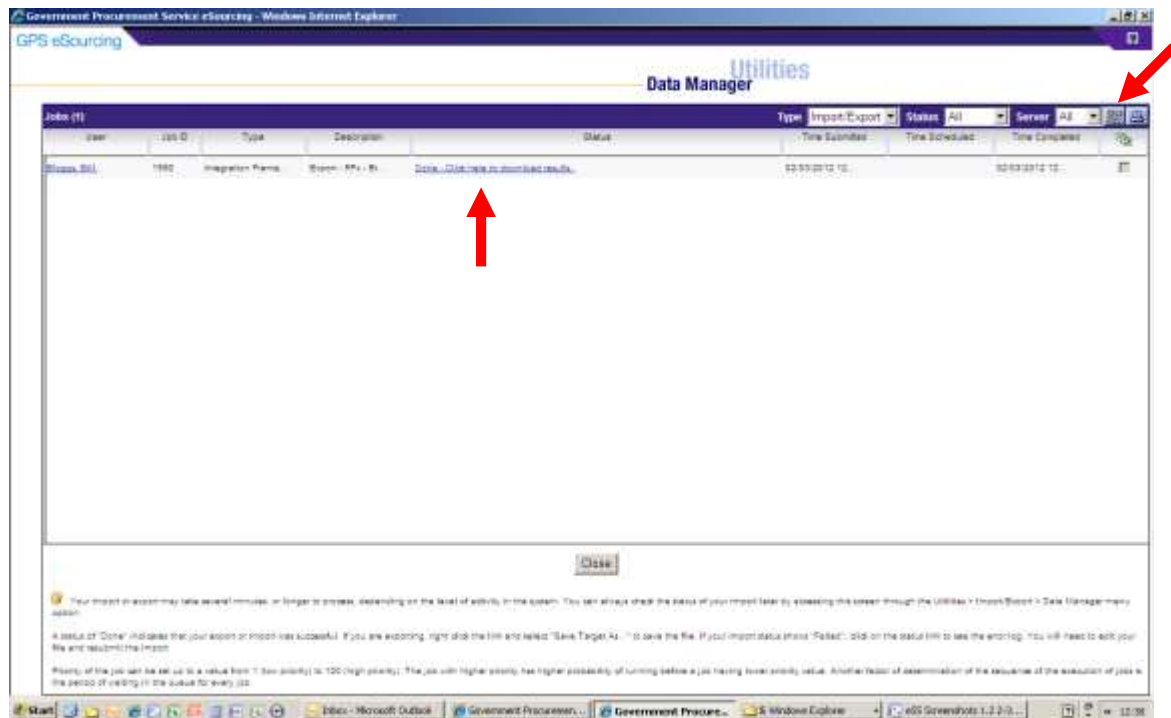
8.7.6. The offline bidding template will be created as an Excel workbook. This has separate worksheets for questions/questionnaires and for bids. There is an Instructions worksheet, which you are recommended to read. There is also a discrete worksheet for any questions answered as tables; which is linked-to from the other worksheets when required.
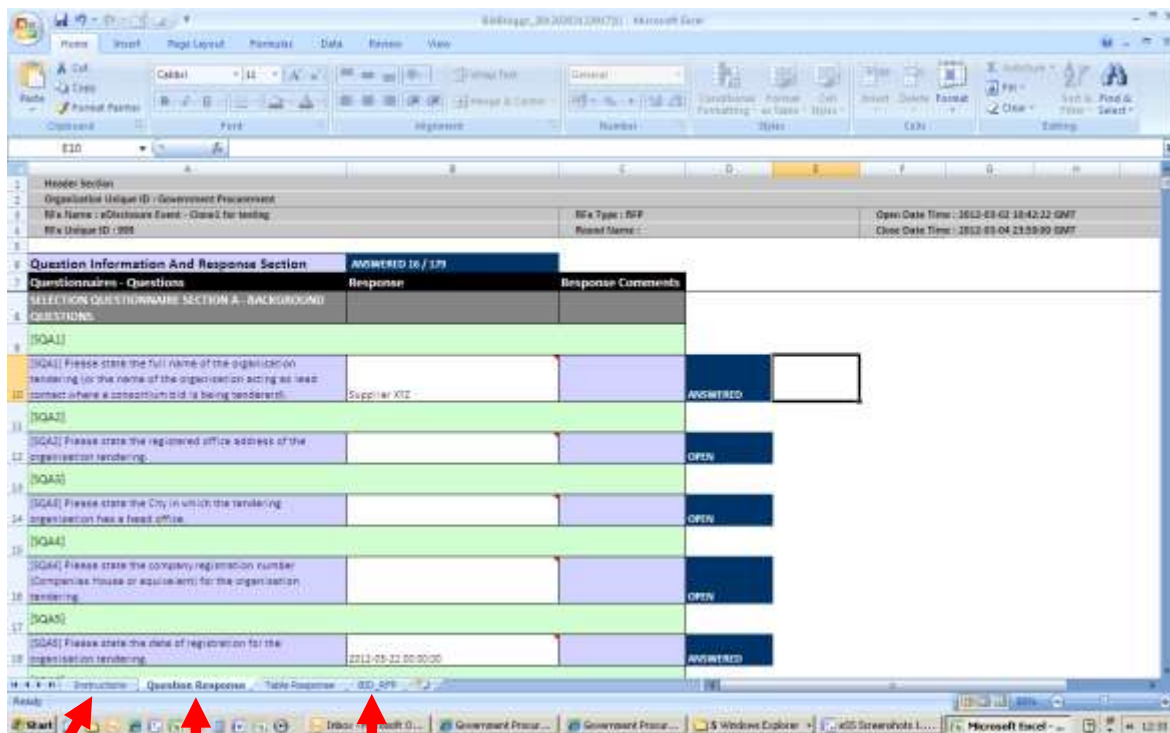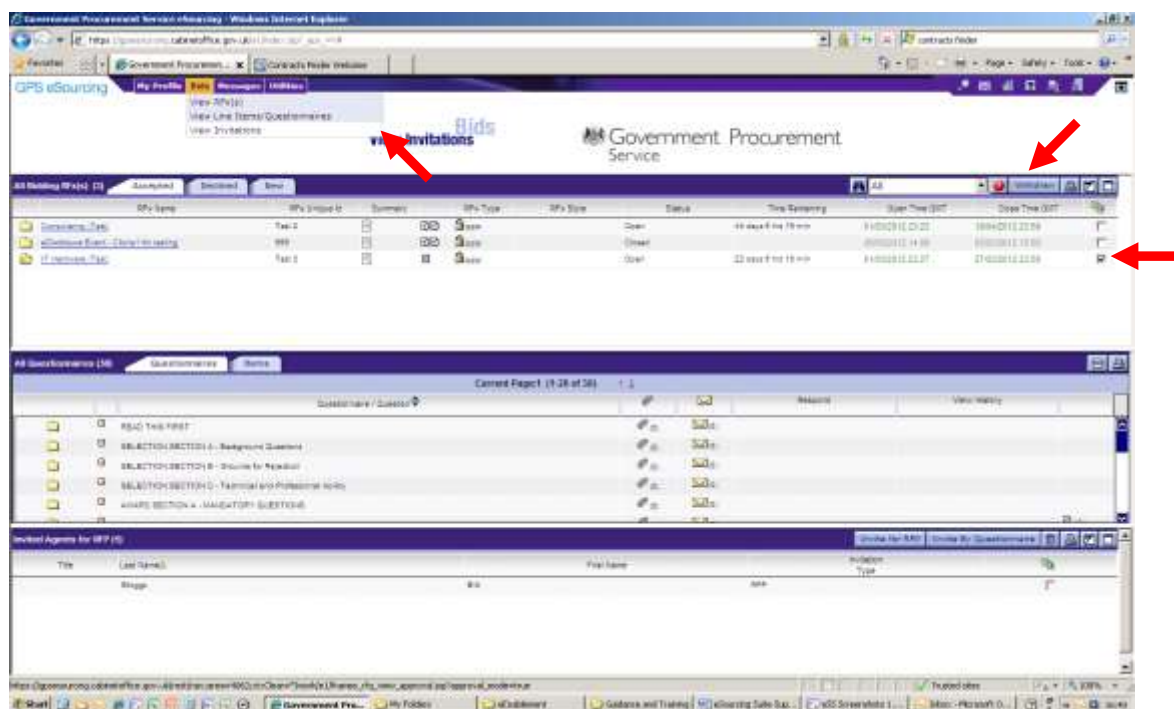

Instructions   Questions worksheet   Bids worksheet

8.8. Withdrawing from an RFx

8.8.1 If you decide not to participate in an RFx to which you have been invited then you are able to record this decision in the eSourcing Suite, the method is dependent upon the status of your participation when you action the decision:

8.8.1.1 **Selected "Accept" to participate in the RFx** – Select the "Decline" button within the RFx event.

8.8.1.2 **Selected "Accept" to participate, but not yet created any response within the eSourcing Suite** – Select "Bids" then "View Invitations" on the top menu-bar. On the right hand-side of the "Accepted" page, tick the check-box for the relevant RFx, then select the "Withdraw" button.

8.8.1.3 **Created a partial or complete response to Questionnaires or Bids, but not yet selected the [Submit all Draft Bids] button** – open the RFx event and:

8.8.1.3.1 For each entry on the "Questionnaires" tab where you have created a response:
8.8.1.3.1.1 Select the "View History" button
8.8.1.3.1.2 Select the tick box on the right-hand side and select the "Dustbin" button.

8.8.1.3.2 For each entry on the "SingleBid" tab where you have created a bid:
8.8.1.3.2.1 Select the "Revise Bids/History" button
8.8.1.3.2.2 Select the tick box on the right-hand side and select the "Dustbin" button.

8.8.1.4 **Created a partial or complete response to Questionnaires or Bids, and also selected the [Submit all Draft Bids] button** – the process is as for Option 3 above.

8.8.2 If after having selected "Decline" or "Withdraw" you wish to reverse this decision and participate in the RFx, this can achieved by:

8.8.2.1 Selecting "Bids" then "View Invitations" on the top menu-bar

8.8.2.2 Select the "Declined" tab.

8.8.2.3 On the right hand-side of the "Declined" page, tick the check-box for the relevant RFx, then select the "Accept" button.

8.8.2.4 The RFx will then available to access via "Bids" and "View RFx(s)" on the top menu-bar, or "Bids" and "View Invitations" then the "Accepted" tab.

8.9. Completing your RFx response

8.9.1.   Your RFx response can be amended at any time up to the closing date and time for the event.

8.9.2.   Prior to the closure of an RFx event, you are advised to **check carefully that you have responded to all the relevant questionnaires and completed all the appropriate bid-fields**. Failure to do this could render your tender or PQQ as non-compliant.

8.9.3.   **There is a requirement to submit your response once you have completed it. Once you are content with your bids you will need to click on the [Submit all Draft Bids] button – this will ensure your response is submitted when the event closes.** You must assume that any response that is un-submitted when the event closes will not be accepted as part of a bid. The [Submit all Draft Bids] button can be selected at any time up to the close of the event, un-submitted responses will be submitted or a confirmation message will indicate that no un-submitted responses were found.

8.9.4.   You can check that all questionnaires have been completed or part completed by ensuring that they all have a green 'Revise Response' button, not a red 'Place Response' button in the Respond field on the RFX questionnaires tab (see section 8.2.2). Questionnaires that have been completed or part completed and saved will have a submitted response "R" icon next to them.

8.9.5.   You can check that all bid-fields have been completed or part completed by ensuring that all items show a 'Revise Bids/History' button when viewed on the 'SingleBid' page (see section 8.3.5). Bid fields that have been completed or part completed will have a submitted bid "B" icon next to them.

8.9.6.   You are recommended to create and download the RFx Report (see section 11.1), and review this to ensure that all your question responses and bids are correct.

8.9.7.   When an event does close, you will no longer be able to make amendments to question responses, bids, or attachments. However, you will still be able to view your responses, and to print reports on the event (see section 11.1).

9. Managing Attachments

9.1.RFx Attachments

9.1.1. An RFx will include attached documents, such as Word or Excel files. These documents form a key part of the RFx and should always be read carefully before accepting the invitation to an event, or beginning to complete your response.

9.1.2. Documents can be attached to an RFx at level of specific questions, or specific questionnaires, or at the overall RFx level if allowed.
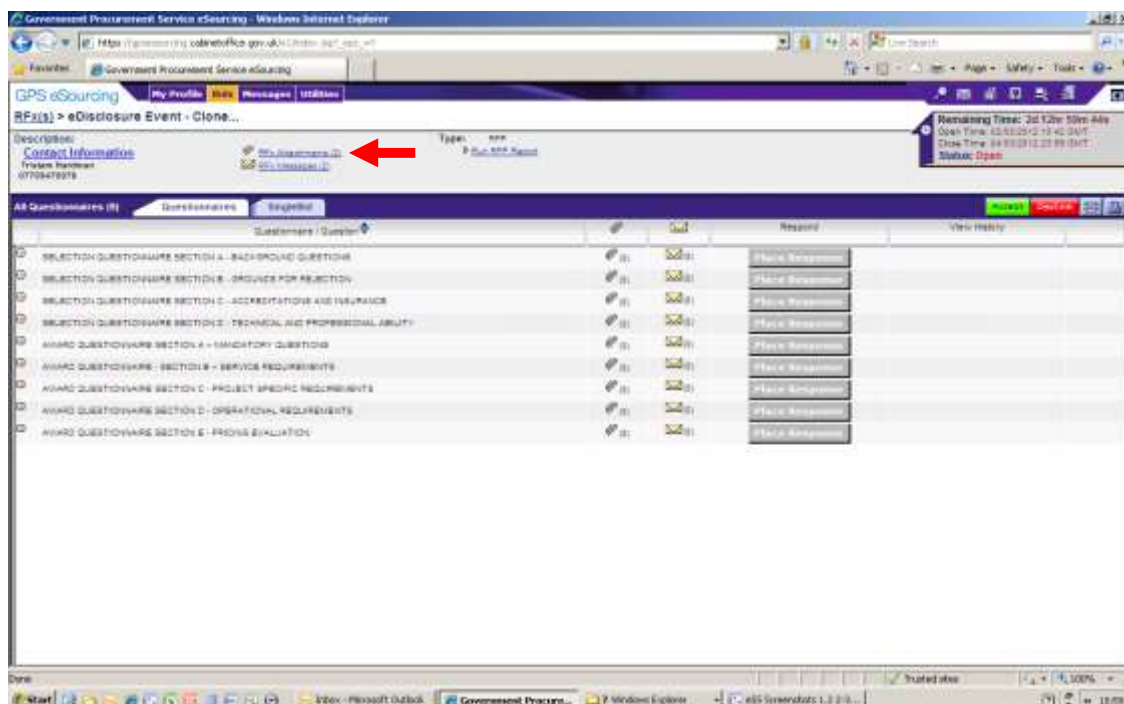
- Crown Commercial Service will attach documents for suppliers to review at the RFx level.

- Unless otherwise instructed, suppliers should always attach their documents at the level of specific questions. The relevant question will make it clear when an attachment is required as part of your response.

9.1.3. The attachments to an Invitation to Tender (ITT) will include:

- ITT Document

- Terms and Conditions of contract

- Response Guidance, Evaluation and Marking Scheme document(s).

- Terms of Participation

- Compliance Certificate(s)

- A link to the supplier guidance

9.2.Opening Attachments

9.2.1. To view the RFx attachments, first click on the 'RFx Attachments' link.

9.2.2. The page that follows will list all of the current RFx attachments, and information such as the owning organisation and the date last modified. Initially these will only show attachments made by Crown Commercial Service: but your documents will also show here once attached (see below).

9.2.3. You can open a specific attachment by clicking on its 'Content' field; or by ticking the check-box to the right of the attachment and then clicking the 'Export' button. The document will be downloaded to your local system.
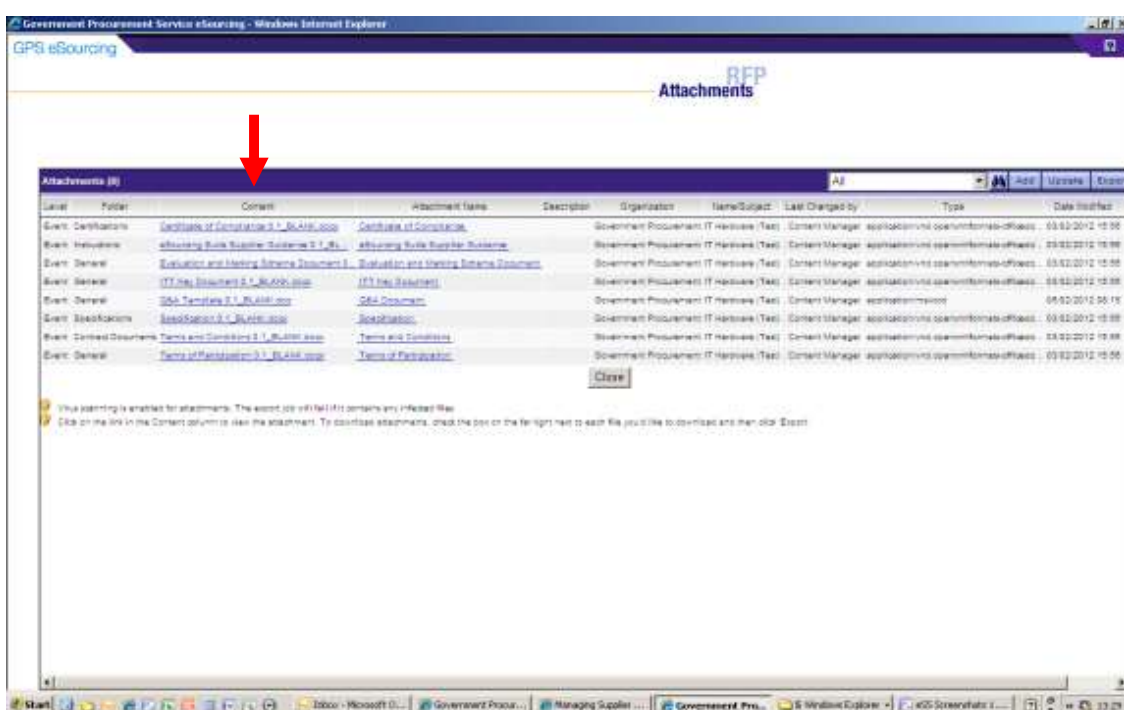
9.3. Adding an Attachment at the Question level

9.3.1. A supplier can add attachments as part of its RFx response. Attachments should be added at the level of individual questions, and only if clearly stated in the question.

DO NOT attach documents unless explicitly asked to do so in a question.

<u>Information included in unrequested attachments will not be evaluated, and could jeopardise the compliance of your tender.</u>

9.3.2. Attachments are added as part of the response to a question (see section 8.2). To add an attachment, click on the paperclip icon found to the right of the question's answer box.
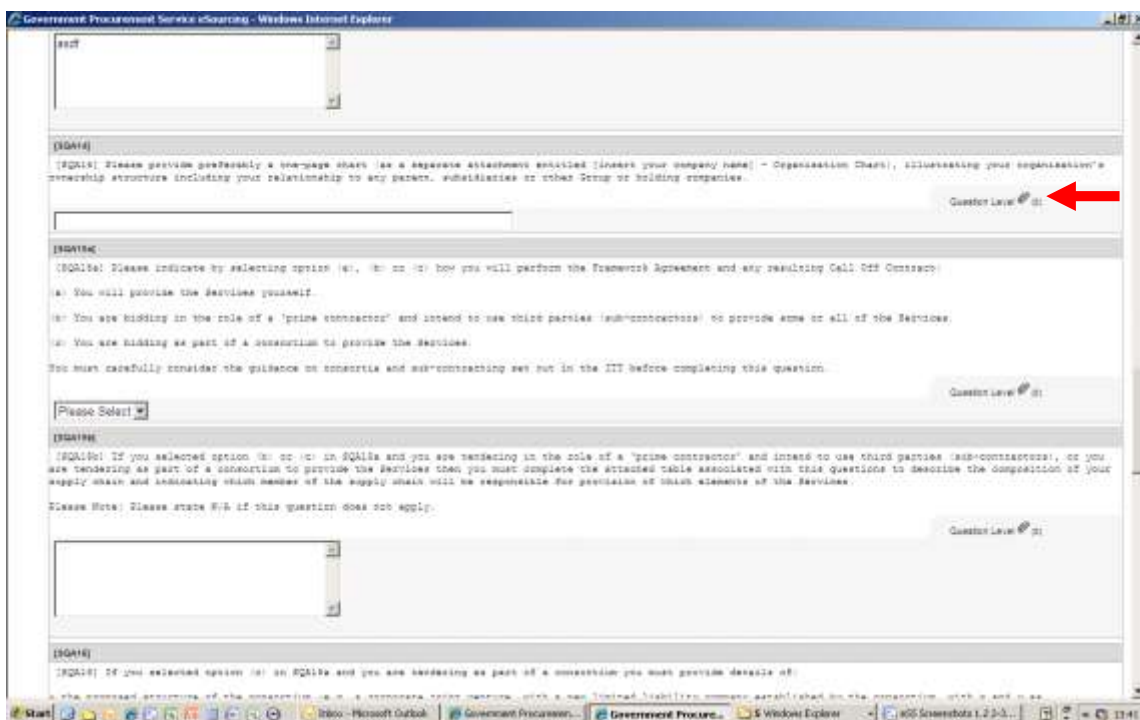
9.3.3. A new window will open, enabling you to browse and locate the document(s) for attachment. Each attachment must be given an unambiguous name and be in the file-format specified in the question.
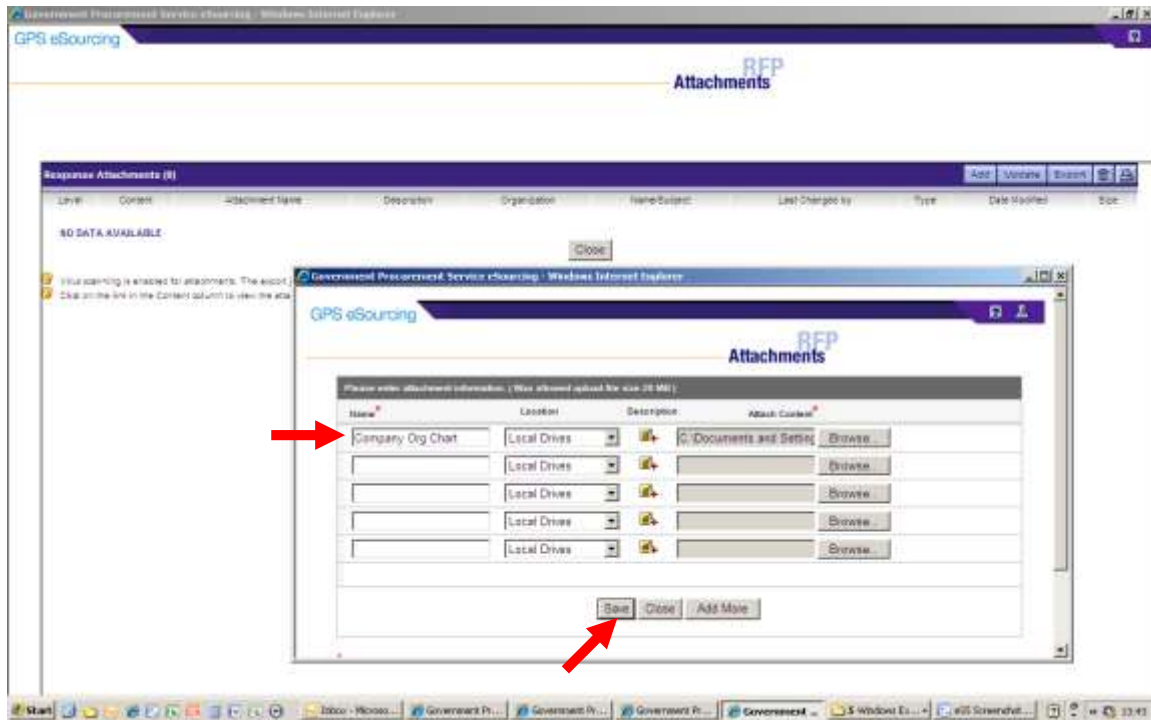
9.3.4. Individual attachments cannot exceed 20MB in size. Multiple attachments can be added at the same time.

9.3.5. Click 'Save' and then 'Close' to upload your attachments to the eSourcing Suite. Once successfully completed, the attachments should be listed on the RFx Attachments page (see section 9.2.3)

9.4. Adding an Attachment at the RFx level

9.4.1.   From the RFx Attachments page, the eSourcing Suite also enables attachments to be added at the RFx level, rather than at the level of specific questions. This would be done by clicking on the 'Add' button.

9.4.2.   However, unless explicitly instructed to do so in the ITT documentation, suppliers should NOT add attachments at the RFx level – but should do so at the level of individual questions (see above).
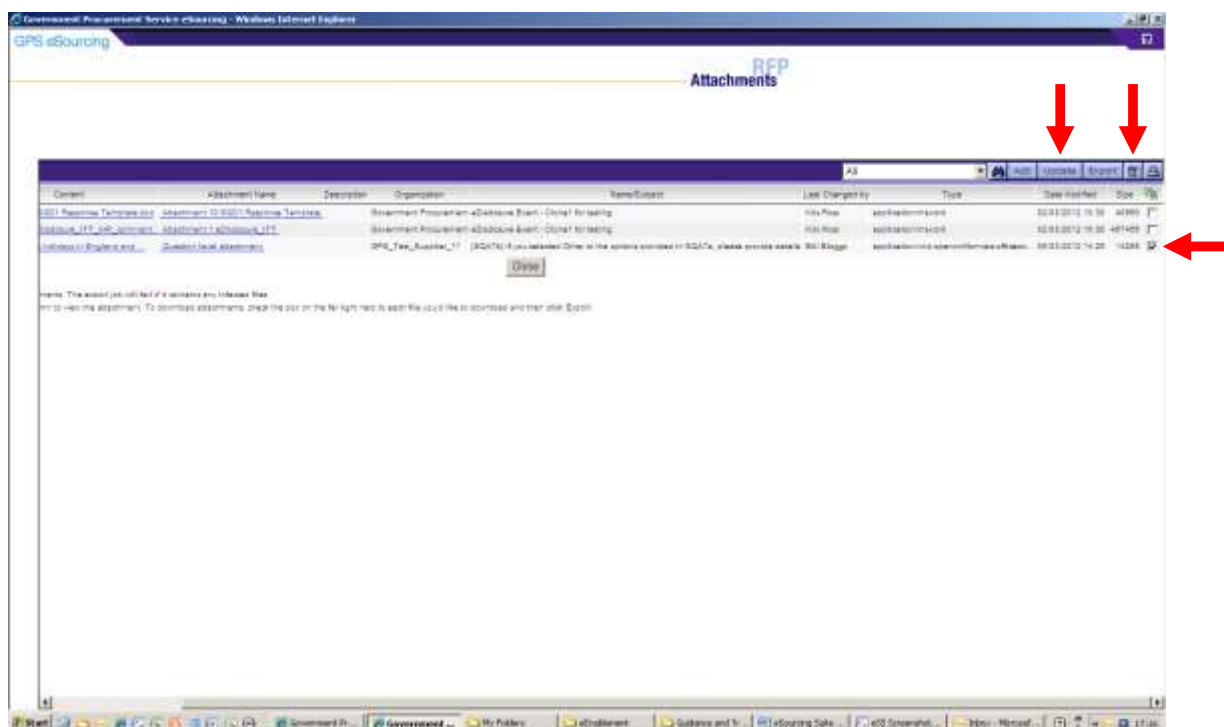
! Attachments should NOT be added at the RFx level
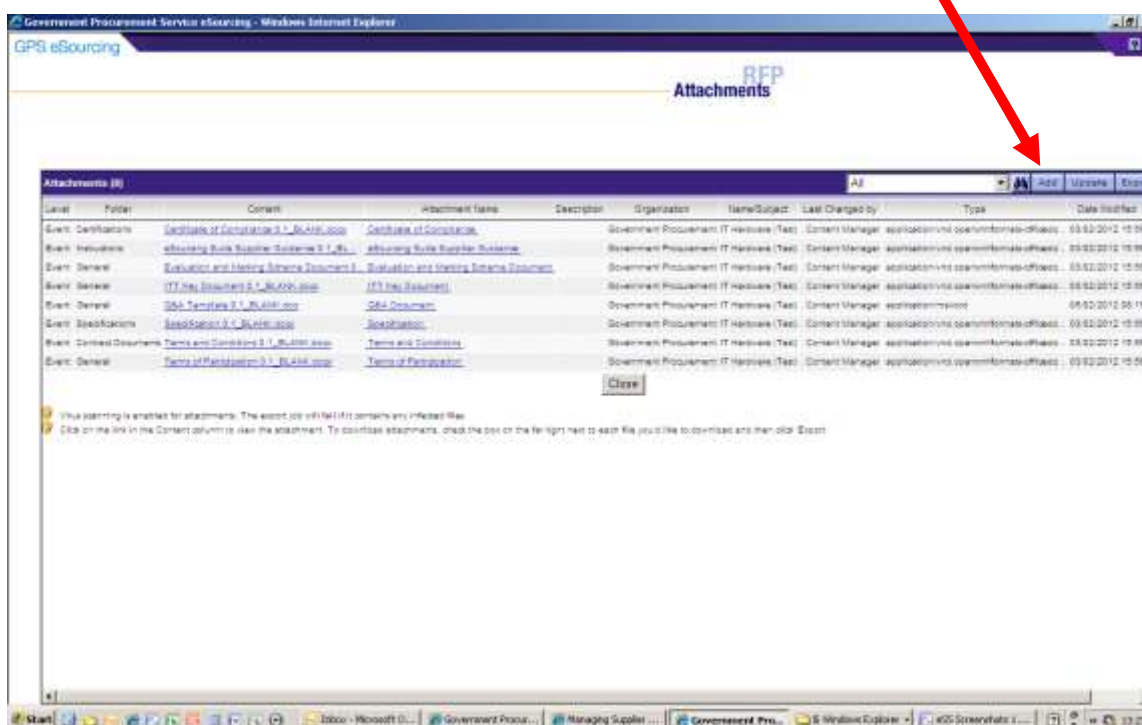
9.5. Updating or Deleting an Attachment

9.5.1. You can update an attachment (that you have previously attached), replacing it with a later version. To do this tick that attachment's check-box on the right-hand side of the page. Click on the Update button and the 'Edit Attachment' window will open. You can browse to find your new file and/or change the name of the attachment if you wish.

9.5.2. To delete an attachment, select the attachment's check-box, and then click the delete 'Waste-basket' icon.

9.5.3. Note that, although attachments should not normally be added at the overall RFx level, attachments made at the question-level can be updated or deleted either from within the relevant questionnaire or from the main RFx attachments page.

9.5.4. It is not possible for suppliers to update or delete attachments made by Crown Commercial Service.

10. Messaging

10.1. Messaging support

10.1.1. The eSourcing Suite supports the sending and receiving of messages between RFx participants and Crown Commercial Service. The system also generates messages to inform users of activities, such as when an event is opened or closed.

10.1.2. When a user is sent a message within the eSourcing Suite, they will also be sent a notification email (to the email address is that user's online profile).

10.1.3. **All messages to Crown Commercial Service concerning a live event should be sent via the eSourcing Suite messaging** facilities and not, for example, by email.

10.1.4. Similarly, when replying to messages from Crown Commercial Service, suppliers should always reply using the messaging facilities in the eSourcing Suite (and not reply to notification emails).

10.2. Viewing Messages

10.2.1. You can choose to see all the messages that you have received (about all RFxs), or only the messages relating to a specific event.

- Click on the RFx Messages link to see the messages relating to a specific event
- Click on the message 'envelope' icon to see all your messages.
- Alternatively, either can be viewed using the Messages button on the top menu-bar.
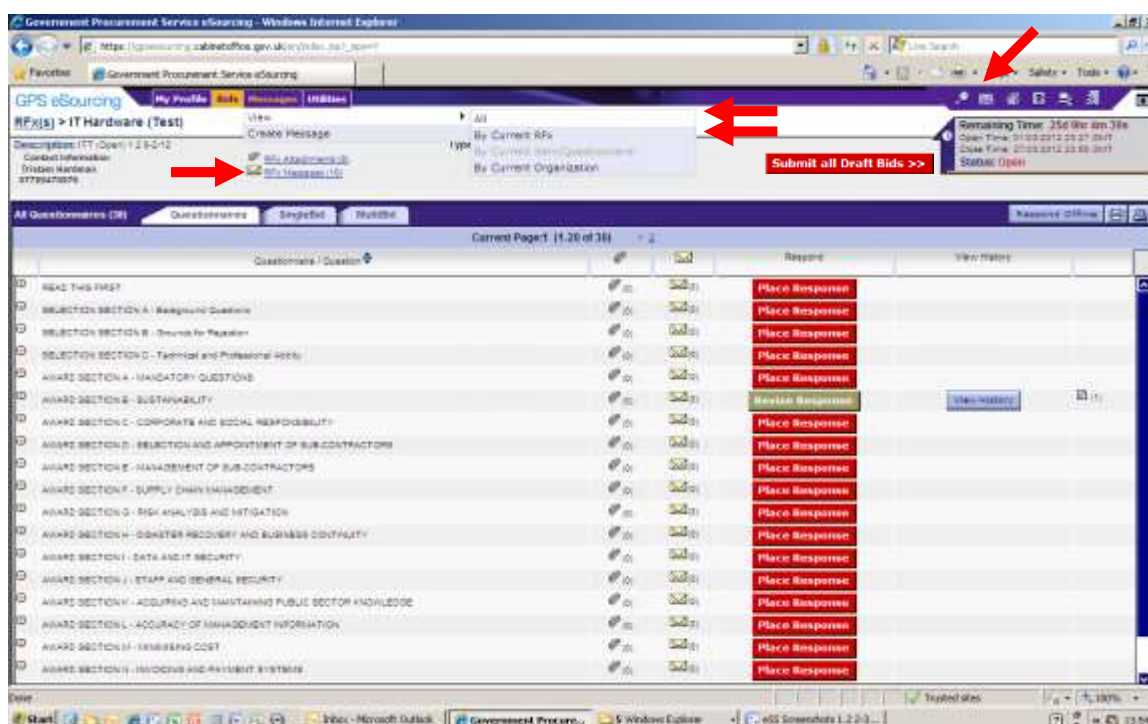
10.2.2. The page that opens will display your received messages; or you can click on the 'Sent Messages' tab to see your sent messages. Broadcast messages are those sent centrally to inform users about system changes or issues, adn should be viewed regularly.
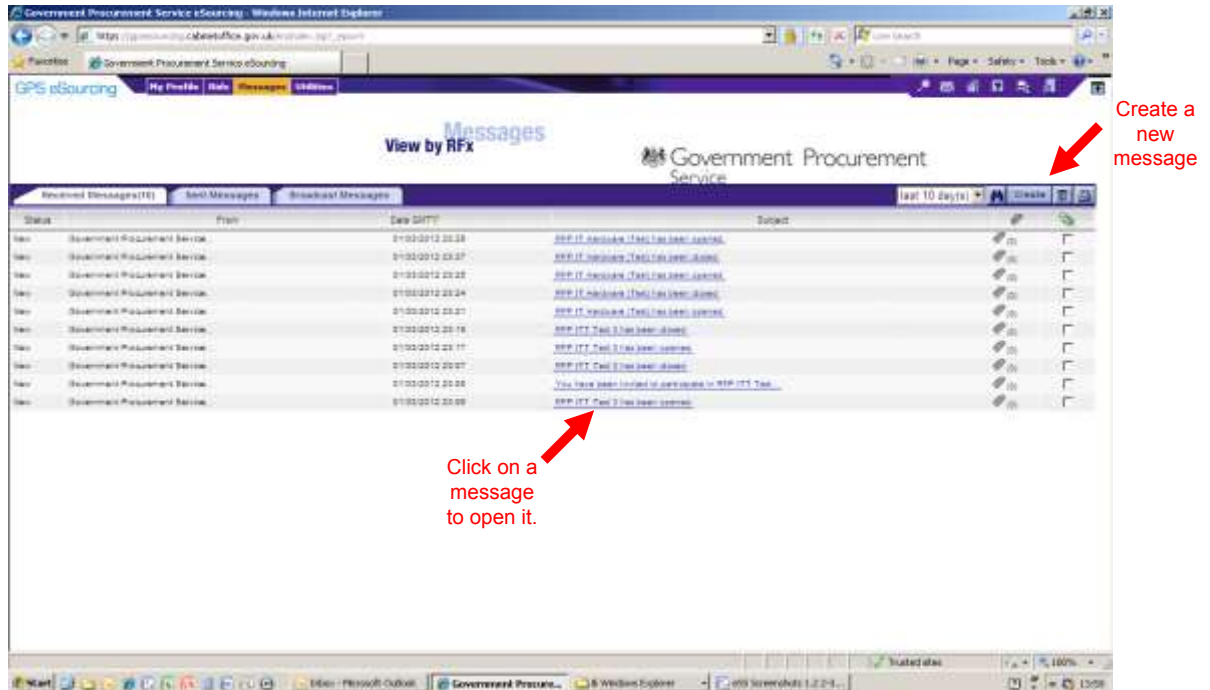
10.3.   Creating Messages

10.3.1. Crown Commercial Service strongly recommends suppliers open a procurement and manage messages from within a procurement. This sets the context for the message and makes it more difficult to send a message to the wrong recipient. We do not recommend the use of the messages tab at the top of the page or the messages (envelope) icon at the top right of the screen.
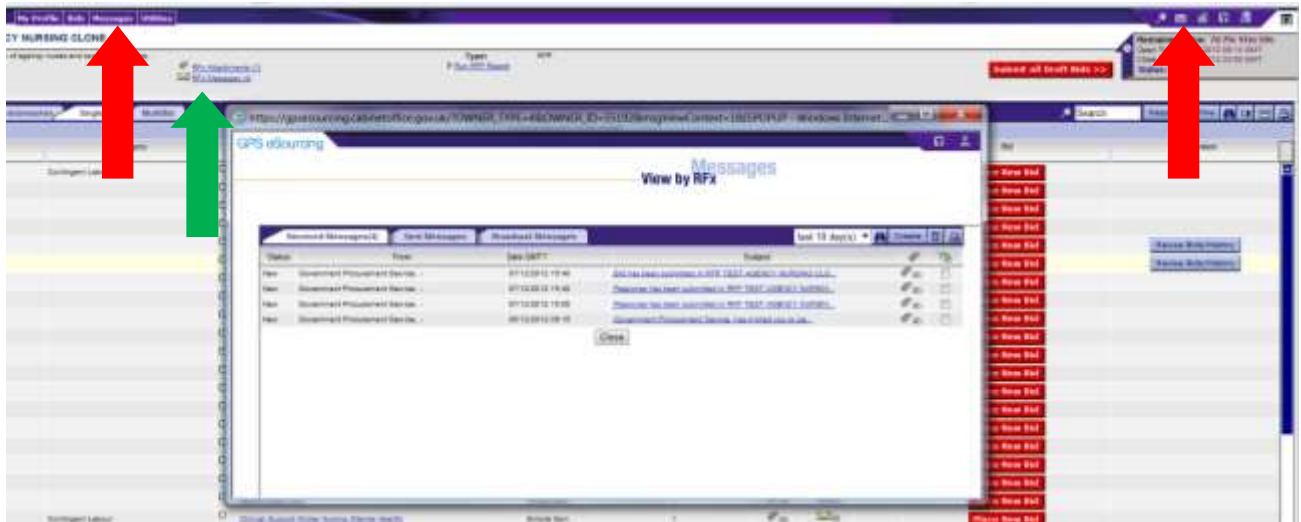
10.3.2. You can reply to a message that you have received by opening the message and using the 'Reply' button.

10.3.3. To create a new message click on the 'Create' button on the Messages page.

10.3.4. When sending a new message to Crown Commercial Service:

- the 'Context' field should be used to identify the specific RFx event that your message refers to. By default, if you are viewing the messages relating to a specific event, and click the create button to make a new message, the context of that message will be set to that specific event.

- The 'To' field should be set to 'All Hosts' (unless specifically otherwise instructed in the ITT Documents)

10.3.5. A message sent in this way will only be visible to Crown Commercial Service, not to any other suppliers participating in the event. If you choose to message from the top tab or envelope con, you will have to ensure you choose the correct procurement name as the context. SELECTING YOUR OWN ORGANISATION NAME IN THE CONTEXT BOX WILL SEND A MESSAGE TO YOUR OWN ORGANISATIONS USERS ONLY, AND WILL NOT BE VISIBLE TO CROWN COMMERCIAL SERVICE.
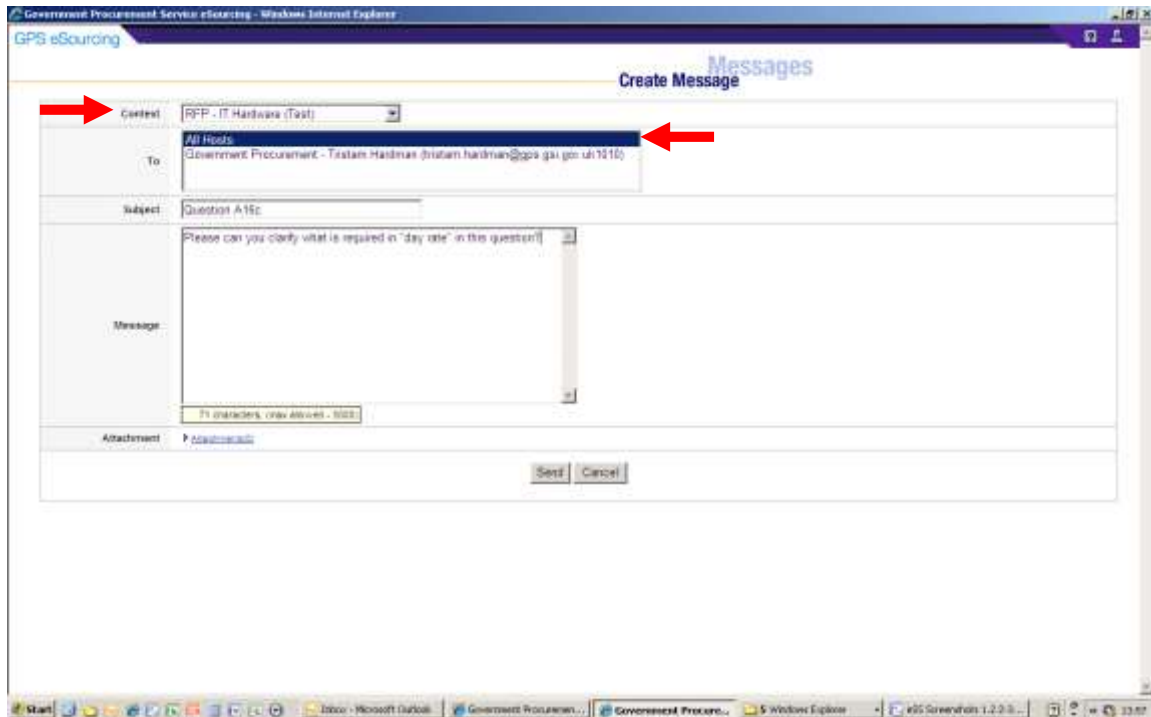
10.3.6. The eSourcing Suite can also be used for a supplier user to send messages to other users for that same supplier. To do this, the message 'Context' field should be set to your organisation's name, and the 'To' field set to 'All Users'.
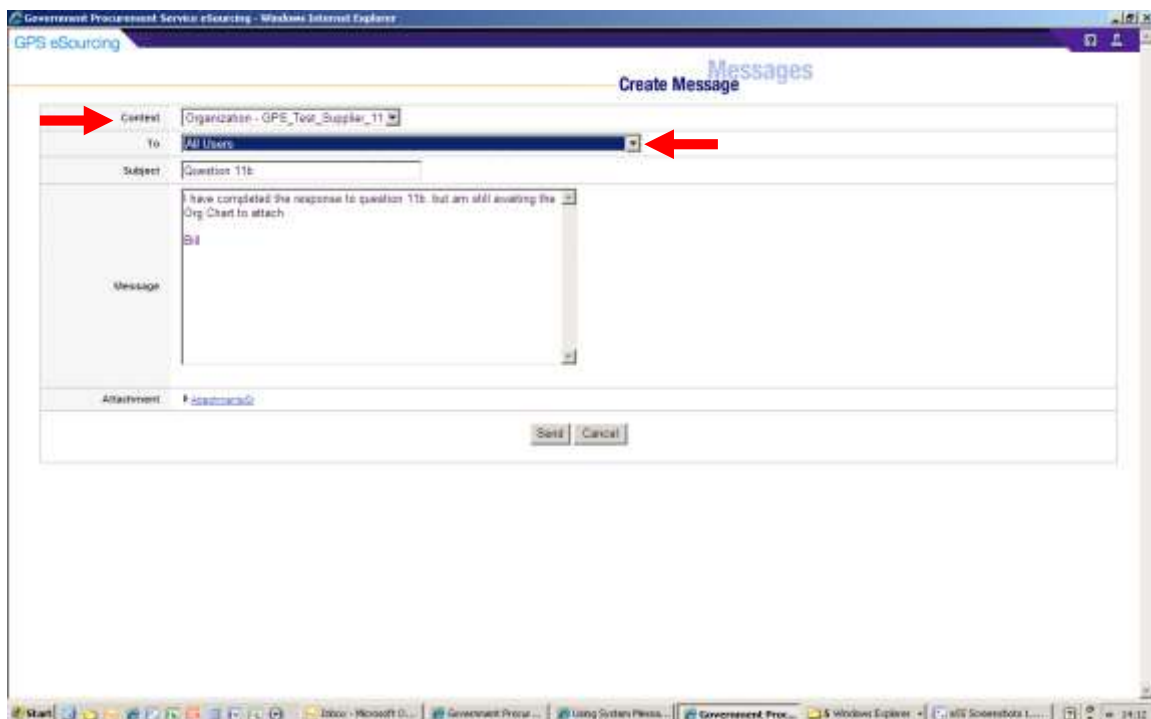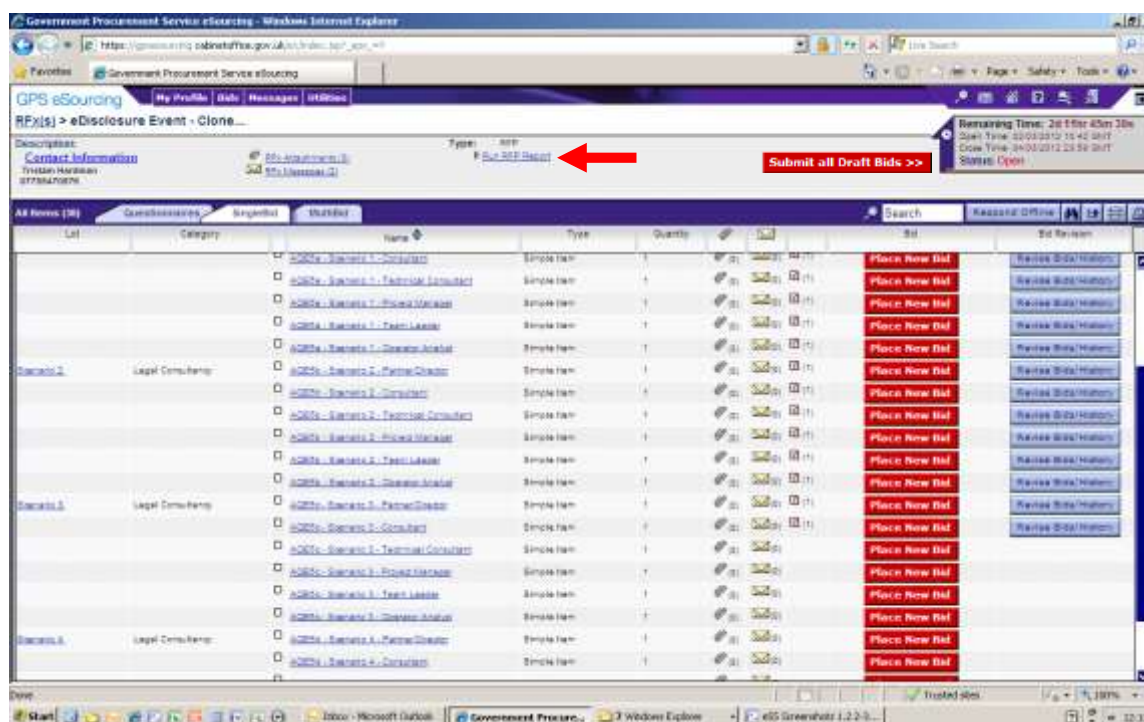
11. Reporting

11.1.   Running RFx Reports

11.1.1. During an event, or after the event has completed, the eSourcing Suite can be used to generate summary reports. These reports can be exported to your local system and retained for your records.

11.1.2. To create a report, click on the 'Run RFP Report' link.

11.1.3. You can edit the report parameters – to report on the entire RFx, or only on specific questions and/or item or bid attributes. You can also select the file-format of the report.

11.1.4. Click on the OK button. The 'Utilities – Data Manager' page will open. Your report download will show as the most recent job. The status of this job will initially be 'Running' but, once completed, will change to 'Done – Click here to download results'

If the download does not appear to be progressing, clicking on the four-arrowed refresh icon will update to the latest job status.

12.   Further Competitions

12.1.   Customers' further competitions

12.1.1. A Further Competition is a tender run by a customer (CCS may act as the Agent for a customer where a formal agreement exists) under an existing Crown Commercial Service framework agreement. Only the suppliers that have previously won a place on a specific framework agreement will be able to participate in such a further competition.

12.1.2. Customers' further competitions are run through the eSourcing suite. Suppliers who are part of CCS framework agreements are automatically registered for further competitions which means you will automatically be invited to further competition events. Participating in a further competition is a simplified version of participating in a full tender – and specific instructions are provided here to describe the further competition process.

12.2.   Viewing a Further Competition

12.2.1. For further competitions, each supplier organisation has been set up with a specific additional user (or users) called the Further Competition User. This is the user that, by default, will receive email alert to the launch of a new further competition. **To view a further competition, you should log-on as the Further Competition user. Further competition username will typically look like FurtherComp123456.**

12.2.2. Further Competition Users have been set-up so that suppliers can maintain control of receipt of further competitions by changing the Further Competition email address within the user details. A supplier can add as many users to the templates for further competitions as are required by contacting the eEnablement help desk.

12.2.3. The Supplier Application Manager (SAM) is in control of the user accounts and can change the further competition email address. To change the email for a further competition user, log in as the user and under the Utilities tab select Utilities>Admin>My Profile. The profile screen will appear where you can change user details including email address.

12.3.   Responding to a Further Competition

12.3.1. Upon log-in (as the Further Competition User), your landing page will show a list of procurements you have been invited to.

12.3.2. Select the competition you wish to respond to by pressing the View/Respond to RFx button. The competition screen will open. You will see the requirement document as an attachment under the attachments link.


12.3.3. Selecting the attachment in the content column will allow you to download and open attachments.
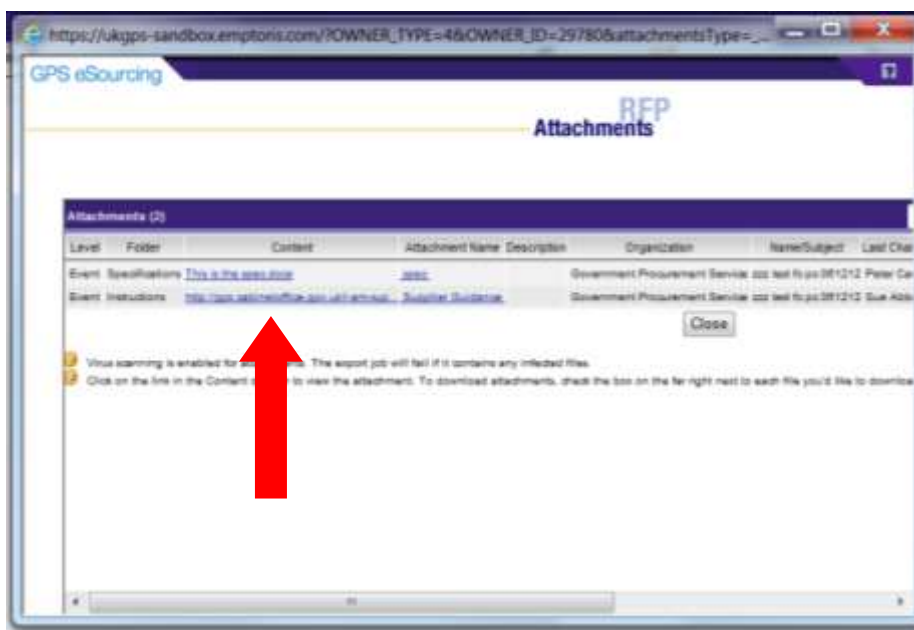
12.3.4. Once you have read all of the attached documentation, you may want to send a message to the customer running the competition. See section 10 of this guide for messaging. **All messaging should be conducted through the eSourcing suite, and should be created using the message link from within an open procurement.** This automatically sets the context for a message. Messaging done from elsewhere in the system is not recommended.
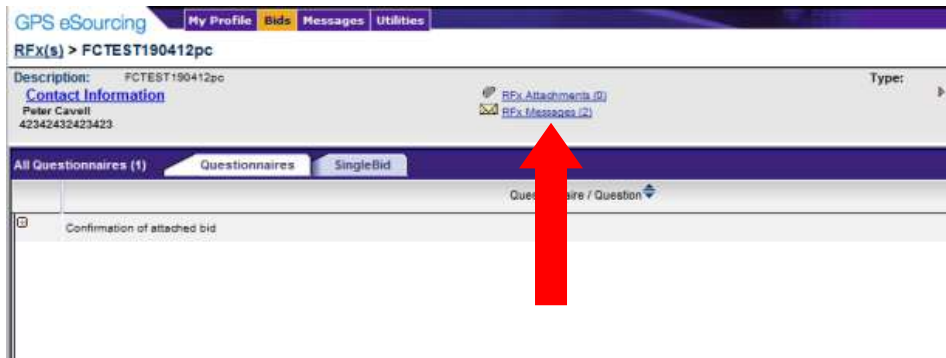

12.3.5. Click on the messages link, and the messages window will open. You can see received, sent and broadcast messages. Click create.
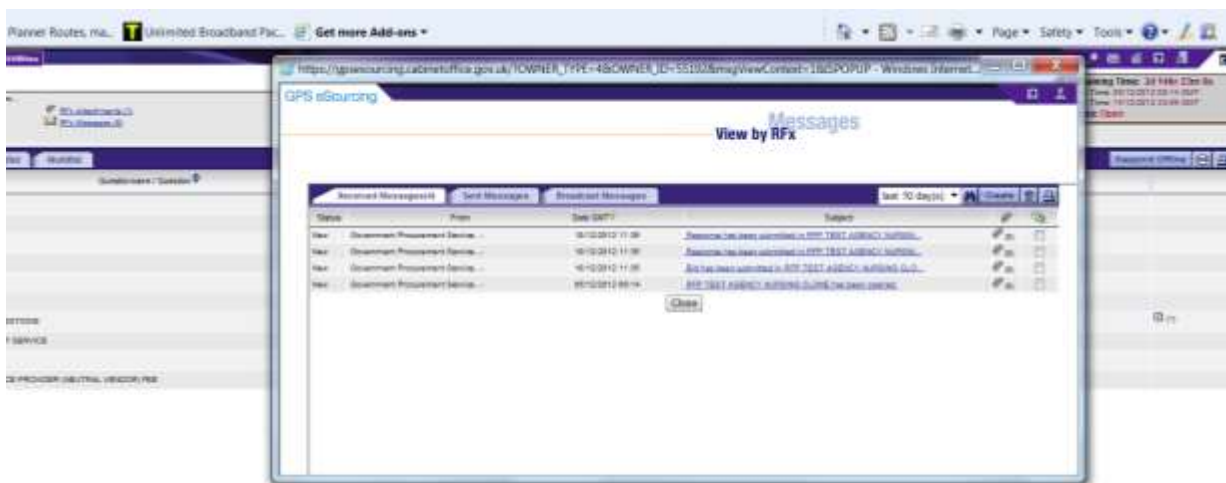

12.3.6. The messaging window will appear. You can type in a subject and a message. You must then click on all hosts to highlight it before you press send. The context is automatically added by the system as the message is generated from within the procurement.
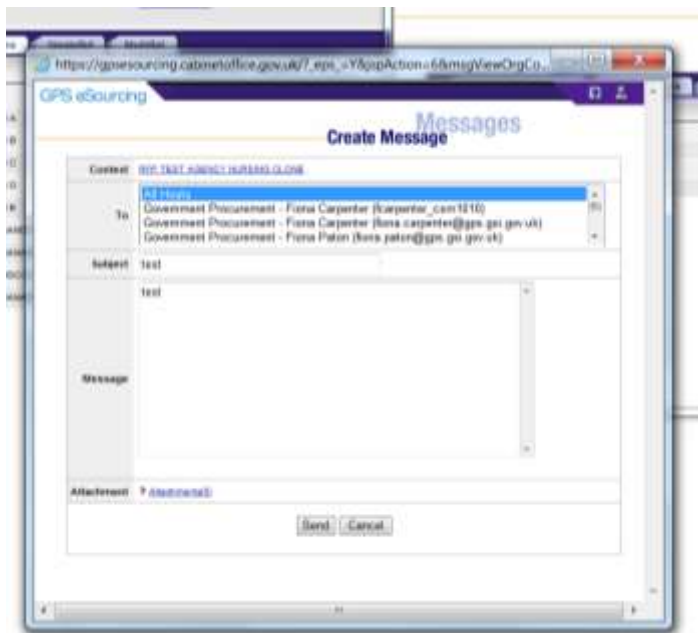
12.3.7. When you have read the documentation, completed any clarification messaging, and decided if you wish to bid, you can accept or decline the invitation. To the right hand side are accept and decline buttons. You must select one to proceed. Clicking decline allows a response detailing your reasons for declining to be sent. Clicking accept enables the response.
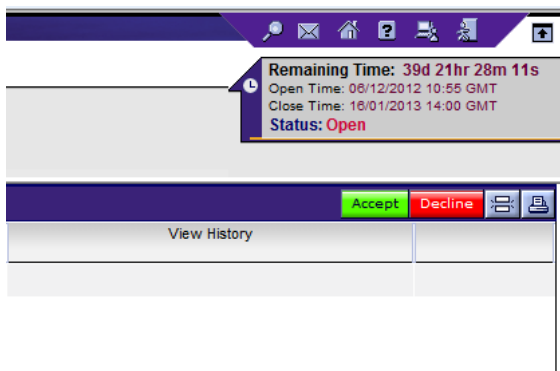

12.3.8. The response is in 2 parts – firstly under the questionnaires tab select place response. A window will open asking you if you have attached your response and bid. Attach your response documents by clicking the paperclip symbol next to the question. This is your formal response as requested by the organisation competing the requirement. Once saved a number corresponding to the number of attachments you have added will appear next to the paperclip. These can be amended at any time. Select Yes from the drop down box to indicate you have added these, and press save.
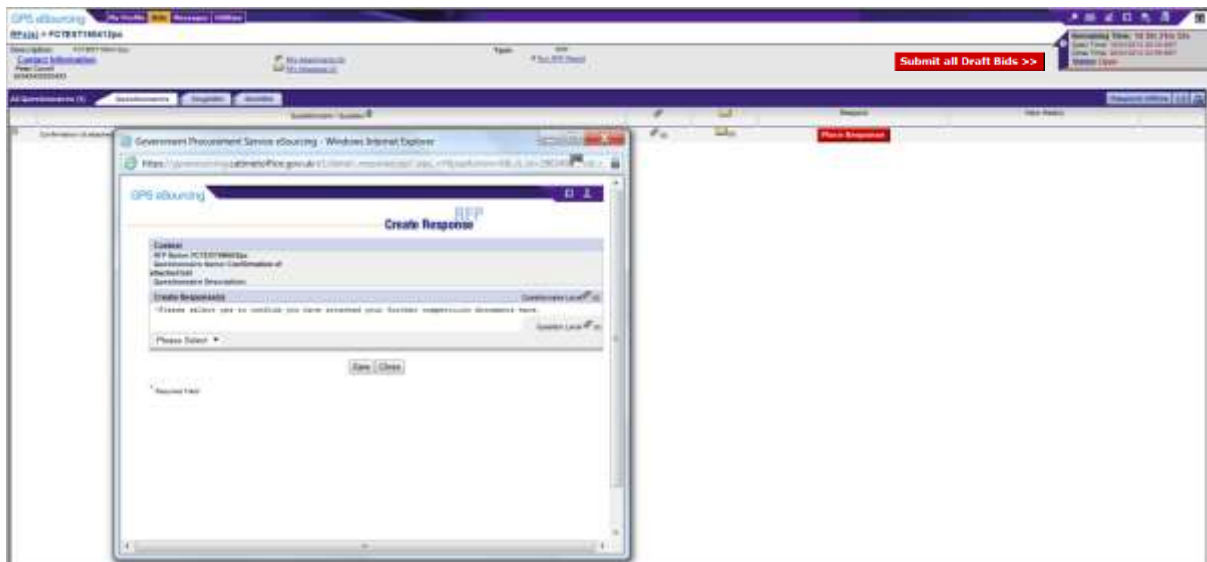
12.3.9. The response resides in the system as a draft until you press the [Submit all Draft Bids] button. Any draft submissions that have not been submitted prior to event closure will not be considered compliant, or be visible to the customer.
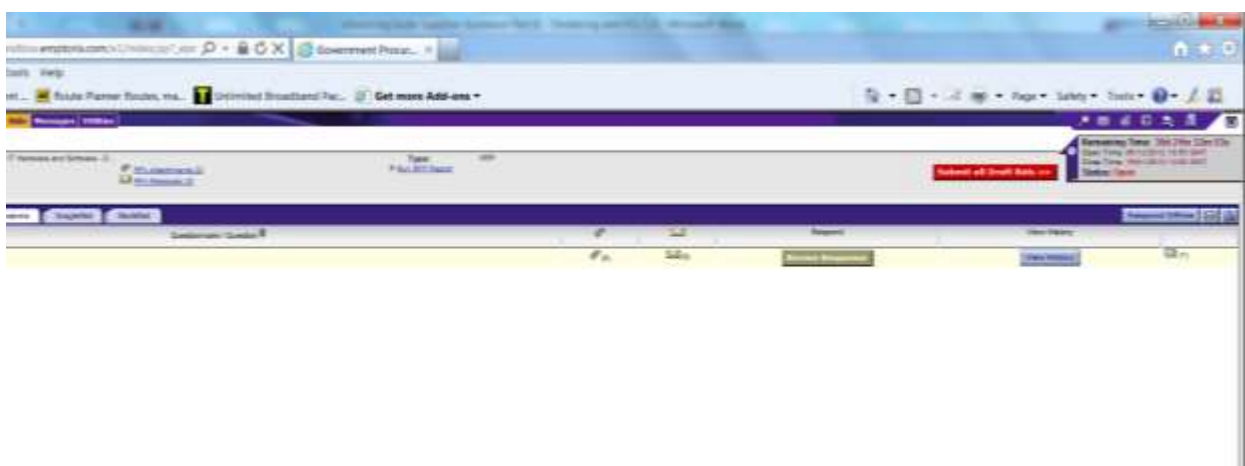
12.3.10. Once the documents have been attached, click the singlebid tab. Click on place new bid. A window will open and ask you to enter the value of the bid. This represents the total amount in the bid. This value field acts as a reporting and audit field only and is not your legal price submission which will be contained within your bid attachment. Crown Commercial Service use this field for reporting purposes only.
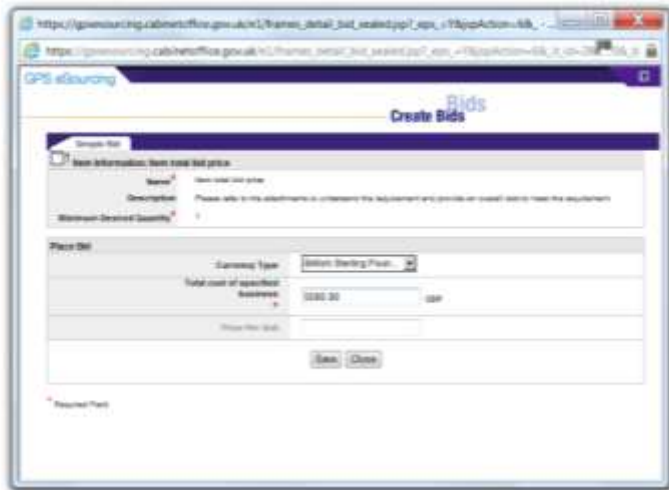
12.3.11.   Once the attachment, response, and bid value have been entered, your bid will be in draft. **You MUST press the [Submit all Draft Bids] button for this bid to be submitted and visible to the customer**. Any elements of your bid that you haven't been submitted will have a draft icon "DB" next to it.
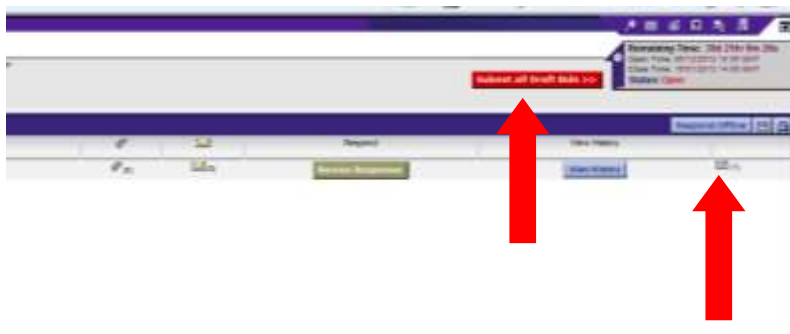
12.3.12.   Once the submit button has been pressed, you will see a confirmation message, and you will receive an external email confirmation. The draft icon "DB" will change to a submitted response "R". You will receive an email confirming your submission.

12.3.13.   From your home screen you will be able to see if a bid and response has been submitted as the "B" and "R" icons will be visible next to the respond button. You can re-bid or change your bid up to closure, but any change to the bid or questionnaire response may result in a draft "DB" icon against this newly entered information. It is your responsibility to ensure you have submitted any DRAFT information if you wish to bid.

12.4.   Competition closing

12.4.1. Upon event closing, any SUBMITTED bids will be visible to the customer. DRAFT bids remain un-submitted, and will not be visible to the customer organisation. The customer will download submitted responses and evaluate and award offline. They may announce award through the system, or they may have a prescribed process within their organisation.

----------------- END -----------------