



**Invitation to Tender**

**Provision of Science Marking Proofers**

Contract Ref: STA-0251

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| --- | --- |
| **Name of Bidding company / Individual:** |  |
| **Name of single point of contact:** |  |
| **Email address:** |  |
| **Phone Number:** |  |
| **Postal Address:** |  |

**1. INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Purpose**

This Invitation to Tender (ITT) has been issued by the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) in connection with a competitive procurement exercise (Ref: STA-0251).

STA is looking to procure four Science Marking Proofers to quality assure key stage 2 science sampling tests to ensure that these tests are accurate and of high quality.

**1.2 Structure**

This document:

* sets out the context for the required services;
* outlines the planned procurement process; and
* contains a response section to evaluate the Bidder's proposed response to STA's requirements.

**1.3 Disclaimer and conditions**

No information contained in this ITT or in any communication made between STA and any Bidder shall be relied upon as constituting a contract, agreement or representation that any contract will be offered.

STA reserves the right, subject to the appropriate procurement regulations, to change without notice the basis of, or the procedures for, the competitive process or to terminate the process at any time. Under no circumstances shall STA incur any liability in respect of this ITT or any supporting documentation and STA will not reimburse any costs incurred by Bidders or potential Bidders in connection with preparation and/or submission of their responses.

The information contained within this document is confidential and should not be disclosed except for purposes related to its completion.

**1.4 Freedom of information and transparency**

STA is committed to open government and to meeting its legal responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. All information submitted to a public authority may need to be disclosed by the public authority in response to a request under the Act. STA may also decide to include certain information in the publication scheme, which it maintains under the Act.

STA also has a commitment to the Government's transparency initiative relating to public sector suppliers, their transactions and their contracts. This includes:

* publication of Tender or Quote documentation;
* publication of financial transactions relating to expenditure with third parties; and
* publication of new contracts.

If a Bidder considers that any of the information included in its response to this Invitation to Tender (ITT) is commercially sensitive, the information should be identified in the table below with an explanation of what harm may result from disclosure if a request is received, and the time period applicable to that sensitivity. Bidders should be aware that, even where they have indicated that information is commercially sensitive, STA might be required to disclose it under the Freedom of Information Act or as part of the Government's transparency arrangements.

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| Section | Commercial sensitivity | Time period |
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**2. SPECIFICATION OF REQUIREMENTS**

**2.1 Overview**

STA is looking to recruit 4 Marking Proofers to work with us to improve and assure the quality of our key stage 2 Science sampling test materials. Bidders should be experienced professionals from a range of backgrounds, for example with expertise including the primary science curriculum, teaching, assessment, marking and editorial work, who can offer specialist or professional skills such as subject knowledge and/or proofing experience in paper and on-line publishing environments.

Ensuring overall quality at STA includes activities within paper-based and on-screen proofing to ensure:

* accuracy and consistency within and across documents;
* that tests and mark schemes reflect each other;
* the materials meet editorial and style guidelines; and
* that the modified tests reflect and/or match the standard tests, as appropriate.

**2.2 The Roles**

We are looking for individuals or organisations with a good understanding of the national curriculum for Science in addition to relevant professional experience.

Experience is likely to come from the classroom, working as a subject advisor to schools, in curriculum development, test development or wider assessment development or from a publishing or professional proofing background.

Marking proofers will have experience of proofing complex materials, on paper and preferably on screen. All proof readers are expected to possess the essential skills of working methodically with high attention to detail. The ability to communicate effectively with various stakeholders, providing constructive feedback within the remit of the brief and suggesting solutions for any problems and/or issues identified, is also essential.

Marking proofers will be required to review the tests and mark schemes or coding frames and ensure the marks or codes awarded for each question are appropriate. They will be required to review the tests to ensure that the tests and mark schemes (and coding frames) reflect each other, that each item has a clear answer, that the mark schemes or coding frames are usable and that none of the answers given are incorrect. Marking Proofers must have recent marking or coding experience in the relevant subject and key stage.

**The successful candidates must:**

* have experience of proof reading paper-based materials and/or on-screen materials;
* have expertise in reviewing assessment materials;
* have knowledge and experience of the Science national curriculum;
* have experience as a key stage 2 science marker or coder;
* be available to review materials in various locations when required, subject to agreement with the Science project team;
* have the capacity to meet the requirements set out in this ITT; and
* confirm that they are not working on the tests in any other capacity; or, if they are, they must provide additional information in the *Further Information Section* of this ITT.

**2.3 Department resources**

The successful Bidders will be expected to work closely with:

* Science Test Development Researchers; and
* Science Project Manager.

Most activity will occur at STA offices in London (Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT) or STA offices in Coventry (Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT).

**2.4 Timescales**

The Science Marking proofing roles will be for 19 months from January 2020 to July 2021.

We anticipate that Science Marking proofers will be required for up to 10 days for the duration of the contract. Please note that this is indicative at this stage. Work will be awarded subject to availability and number of proofers on the framework.

Timelines for individual assignments will be defined upon commencing each test development cycle. Successful contractors will be required to confirm with the contract manager their availability for marking proofing activities as requested.

The period when most proofing is likely to take place is between October and May of each year. Details of the specific times will be outlined closer to the times when work is required. However, the first round of marking proofing activity for Science is anticipated to take place during week commencing 6 January 2020.

**3. INSTRUCTIONS TO BIDDERS**

Bidders should read these instructions carefully as well as the Specification of Requirements section above (section 2) before completing the Tender documentation.

These instructions are designed to ensure that all Bidders are given equal and fair consideration. It is important therefore that you provide all the information asked for in the format and order specified.

The Bidder shall not make contact with any other employee, agent or consultant of the STA who is in any way connected with this procurement exercise during the period of the exercise, unless instructed otherwise by the STA.

All material issued in connection with this ITT shall remain the property of the STA and shall be used only for the purpose of this procurement exercise. Any confidential STA information shall either be returned to the STA or securely destroyed by the Bidder (at STA’s discretion) at the conclusion of the procurement exercise.

The Bidder shall ensure that each and every proposed employee, consortium member and adviser abides by the terms of these instructions.

The STA shall not be committed to any course of action as a result of:

* issuing this ITT or any invitation to participate in this procurement exercise;
* communicating with a Bidder or a Bidder’s representatives or agents in respect of this procurement exercise; or
* any other communication between the STA (whether directly or by its agents or representatives) and any other party.

Bidders shall accept and acknowledge that, by issuing this ITT, the STA shall not be bound to accept any application and reserves the right not to conclude a contract for the services for which applications are invited.

The STA reserves the right to amend, add to, or withdraw all or any part of this ITT at any time during the procurement exercise.

**3.1 Application validity**

Your application should remain open for acceptance for a period of 30 days from the submission date.

**3.2 Proposed contract**

This contract will be let under the terms and conditions of ref: STA-0251. The contract will be for a period of 19 months from 6 January 2020 to 31 July 2021. The following special terms will be applied:

* The parties acknowledge that, except for any information which is exempt from disclosure in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the contents of this Order are not Confidential Information. STA shall be responsible for determining at its absolute discretion whether any of the content of the Order is exempt from disclosure in accordance with the provisions of the FOIA.
* Notwithstanding any other term of the Order, the Contractor hereby gives consent for STA to publish the Order publicly in its entirety, including from time to time agreed changes to the Order, as well as payments made in accordance with the Order.

Bidders should set out below any concerns relating to the use of the Framework terms and conditions or Order Special Terms for this work, noting that STA gives no undertaking to agree to any changes.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Contract Reference** | **Issue** | **Proposed mitigation** |
|  |  |  |

A copy of the draft contract is included in the Appendix for your information.

**3.3 Procurement and delivery timescales**

The proposed procurement timetable is set out below:

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| **Date** | **Stage** |
| 05/11/2019 | ITT issued |
| Midday 20/11/2019 | Deadline for clarification questions |
| Midday 06/12/2019 | Deadline for submission of applications |
| 16/12/2019 | Notification to successful suppliers |
| 30/12/2019 | Contracts issued to successful suppliers |
| 06/01/2020 | Contract start date |

**3.4 Clarification questions**

Clarification requests should be submitted by e-mail only to: TendersTD.STA@education.gov.uk and copied to Rashida.akbar@education.gov.uk.

In order to ensure equality of treatment of Bidders, STA intends to publish the questions and clarifications raised by Bidders, together with the STA's responses (but not the source of the questions), to all participants at regular intervals.

Bidders should indicate if a query is of a commercially sensitive nature – where disclosure of such a query and the answer would or would be likely to prejudice the Bidder’s commercial interests. However, if STA at its sole discretion does not either consider the query to be of a commercially confidential nature, or one which all Bidders would potentially benefit from seeing, then STA will either:

* invite the Bidder submitting the query either to declassify the query or allow the query, along with the STA’s response, to be circulated to all Bidders; or
* request the Bidder, if it still considers the query to be of a commercially confidential nature, to withdraw the query.

STA reserves the right not to respond to a request for clarification or to circulate such a request where it considers that the answer to that request would be likely to prejudice its own commercial interests.

**3.5 Preparation of application**

Bidders are solely responsible for their costs and expenses incurred in connection with the preparation and submission of their application. Under no circumstances will STA, or any of its advisers, be liable for any costs or expenses borne by Bidders, sub-contractors, suppliers or advisers in this process.

Bidders are required to complete and provide all information required by the STA. Failure to comply with these requirements may lead STA to reject an application.

STA relies on Bidders' own analysis and review of information provided. Consequently, Bidders are solely responsible for obtaining the information which they consider is necessary in order to make decisions regarding the content of their applications and to undertake any investigations they consider necessary in order to verify any information provided to them by STA during the procurement process.

**3.6 Confidentiality**

All information supplied by STA to Bidders must be treated in confidence and not disclosed to third parties except insofar as this is necessary to obtain sureties for the purposes of submitting the Quote.

All information supplied by Bidders to STA will similarly be treated in confidence except for the disclosure of such information as may be required in accordance with the requirements of UK government policy on the disclosure of information relating to government contracts including the Freedom of Information Act.

**3.7 Conflict of interest**

Any conflicts of interest should be declared in the bidder’s application including other work for STA that could conflict with the objective and successful discharge of these services.

Curriculum advisors will not be able to act as proofers for the subject/key stage for which they are currently contracted.

Current senior marking team members for a key stage 2 subject will be able to apply for a marker proofer role, but will not be involved in the proofing of the final live test.

Bidders should not be employed by an item writing agency that is contracted by STA to develop test materials.

Quality Assurance proofers who are contracted to provide other quality assurance roles to STA (e.g. acting as a Fresh Pair of Eyes proofer, subject expert proofer, or editorial proofer) will only be able to proof in one of these capacities for any subject in a single test cycle. Bidders appointed as marking proofers are eligible to act as a grammar proofer within the same subject and test cycle.

**3.8 Daily rates and payment**

The daily rate for all types of proofing work is £250. VAT is not applicable and individuals will be taxed at source.

Any successful applicants will be paid on the completion of the relevant work. Travel and subsistence will be paid in line with government guidelines. For overnight stays accommodation will be paid for within the limits of government policy.

**3.9 Submission of applications**

The application must be submitted in the form specified by completing the Bidder’s Response section and using Arial 11 font and in English. Word limits must be adhered to and material in excess of these limits will not be evaluated.

Bidders must submit their responses in electronic format as a Microsoft Word 2016 document (or equivalent) of the Bidder’s Response with their name (individual applicants) or their organisation name (if bidding company) in the document title.

Applications must be received by midday on 05 December 2019 and should be sent to TendersTD.STA@education.gov.uk and copied to Rashida.akbar@education.gov.uk.

Applications will be accepted at any time up to this deadline but will not be opened or evaluated until the deadline has passed.

Any application received after the deadline may be rejected unless the Bidder can provide irrefutable evidence that the application was capable of being received by the due date and time and that delivery failure was beyond their reasonable control.

**3.10 Right to reject/disqualify**

The STA reserves the right to reject or disqualify a Bidder where:

* the Bidder fails to comply fully with the requirements of this ITT, including proper completion of the format for response, or is guilty of a serious misrepresentation in supplying any information required in this document; or
* there is a change in identity, control, financial standing or other factor relating to the Bidder that impacts on the selection and/or evaluation process.

**3.11 Debriefing**

Following the conclusion of the process, all unsuccessful Bidders will have the opportunity of a debriefing. Unsuccessful Bidders should notify STA by email that they wish to be debriefed. STA will aim to debrief unsuccessful Bidders within 10 working days of receiving such a request.

**4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

**4.1 Basis of award decision**

Applications will be reviewed individually against the stated criteria. The 4 highest applicants who exceed the threshold scores for each applicable section will be considered for award of contract.

**4.2 Evaluation process**

Applications will be formally logged upon receipt. Any application that is received after the deadline may be rejected.

Following the deadline, a compliance check will then be conducted on all bids that are received on time to determine whether they correspond to the application requirements. STA may reject any application that does not comply with these requirements.

Applications will be evaluated solely on the responses and associated evidence provided by the Bidder in the following sections of this ITT.

The method of scoring the evaluation sections will be a 0 - 4 point scale. Evaluators will use this to assign a score to each evaluation question response.

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| --- | --- |
| Score | Description |
| 4 marks | A score of 4 will reflect that the bidder has demonstrated highly relevant experience and expertise and therefore has a high probability of successfully delivering the required work. |
| 3 marks | A score of 3 will reflect that the bidder has demonstrated sufficient relevant experience and expertise and therefore has a good probability of successfully delivering the required work. |
| 2 marks | A score of 2 will reflect that the bidder has demonstrated some relevant experience and expertise and therefore has some probability of successfully delivering the required work. |
| 1 mark | A score of 1 will reflect that the bidder has not demonstrated relevant experience and expertise and therefore is unlikely to be able to successfully deliver the required work. |
| 0 marks | No answer provided.  |

**4.3 Allocation of Work**

Work required via STA 0251 will be awarded on first come first served basis subject to availability of proofing experts. We will write to all successful Science marking proofers the first time we require proofing expertise and award the work to those experts who express an interest first. The next time we require these services, we shall write to the proofers again but remove those who were awarded work the first time around from the circulation. Subsequent work will continue to be allocated using this method (i.e. those already allocated work will be excluded) until all proofers have been allocated one piece of work, subject to the volume of work available. Once all proofers have been allocated work, the cycle will repeat. Allocating work in this way is designed to ensure fairness and mitigate the risk of work always being awarded to the same individuals.

**4.5 Quality**

A quality assessment will be carried out upon completion of each allocated piece of work. Proofers who pass the quality assessment will be eligible for later allocation according to the rules above.

**5. BIDDER’S RESPONSE**

Applications will be evaluated solely on the responses and associated evidence provided by the Bidder in the following sections of the ITT. The quality and grammatical accuracy of the application itself will also be taken into account.

Please note that different people may score the responses for different questions; therefore it is important that you include all relevant information in the response for each question even if this duplicates information that you have given in other responses.

Evaluation criteria set out in section 4.2 will be used for evaluating responses to questions provided by bidders in Part A and Part B. The evaluation criteria are set out below for ease of reference.

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| --- | --- |
| Score | Description |
| 4 marks | A score of 4 will reflect that the bidder has demonstrated highly relevant experience and expertise and therefore has a high probability of successfully delivering the required work. |
| 3 marks | A score of 3 will reflect that the bidder has demonstrated sufficient relevant experience and expertise and therefore has a good probability of successfully delivering the required work. |
| 2 marks | A score of 2 will reflect that the bidder has demonstrated some relevant experience and expertise and therefore has some probability of successfully delivering the required work. |
| 1 mark | A score of 1 will reflect that the bidder has not demonstrated relevant experience and expertise and therefore is unlikely to be able to successfully deliver the required work. |
| 0 marks | No answer provided.  |

**Please note that Part A and Part B below are MANDATORY: All applicants MUST complete these sections. Failure to provide responses to questions in this section will result in your application being rejected.**

**Part A: Quality Assurance (Mandatory Section)**

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| **Expertise and experience of Quality Assurance** |
| **Q1. In no more than 750 words, please give details of your expertise and experience in quality assuring and proof reading print based materials, including any formal training in print-based QA processes**. Provide details where expertise has been used in other educational settings, such as educational publishing, other test development situations, to LAs, at conferences or in academic or education articles.Your response should demonstrate substantial experience in the quality assurance of print-based materials. Please note that the quality of your application will also be taken into account.*Question weight: 100%* |
| **Bidder’s Response:***Word count =*  |

The technical quality threshold is 60%.

**Part B: Marker proofer**

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| **Q2. In no more than 500 words, please give details of your expertise in marking or coding the science sampling tests and your familiarity with the mark schemes or coding frames.**Your response should demonstrate substantial experience in marking or coding science, clearly outlining how expertise was developed over time.*Question weighting: 100%* |
| **Bidder’s Response:***Word Count =*  |

The technical quality threshold is 75%.

**Additional questions** (not scored)

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| **Are you classed as a Small Medium Enterprise (SME)?** | Yes / No  |
| **If you are currently working on any test development / marking activities for STA or any other organisation, please provide details here.** |  |
| **Please indicate periods of known unavailability for the duration of the contract.** |  |

**Declaration by Bidder**

I have examined STA's requirements and the additional special terms set out in this ITT, and hereby offer to enter into a contract with STA for the required services and at the prices set out in this ITT.

I furthermore warrant that:

* I have the required corporate authority to sign this Tender;
* There has been no breach of STA's confidentiality requirements;
* There is no conflict of interest in our proposed delivery of this service;
* There has been no collusion with other Bidders or potential Bidders;
* There has been no canvassing of STA staff; and
* The Tender shall remain open for acceptance by STA for a period of 30 days after the due date for return of Tenders.

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| Signed: |  |
| Name: |  |
| Date: |  |
| Role: |  |
| Authorised to sign Quotes on behalf of [organisation name if applicable]: |  |

**APPENDIX: DRAFT CONTRACT**

This draft contract document is for your information only. Successful bidders will be issued with contracts following the conclusion of the procurement process.

