



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

**Defra Group Commercial
'Marine Environmental Monitoring and Assessment
National Database (MERMAN)'**

**MERMAN - Data
Management**

Request for Information

Contents

1.	Purpose of the RFI	3
	General Guidance	3
2.	Background	4
3.	Questions	5
	Q1. Scope of service.....	5
	Q2. Costs.....	5
	Q3. Data and Development	6
	Q4. Technical	6
4.	RFI Next Steps, Timescales and Contact Details.....	6

1. Purpose of the RFI

This Request for Information (RFI) is to provide potential suppliers the opportunity to inform Defra (the "Contracting Authority") of its service offering as well as identify areas of possible concern with the Contracting Authority's requirements. The RFI is purely for the purposes of pre-procurement market engagement and any results from these responses and follow up meetings may be used to inform our final set of requirements, any procurement strategy and enhance any Bidder Pack that we may be issuing. It should be noted that any output from the RFI responses will not form part of any evaluation.

General Guidance

This RFI (which shall be deemed to include any materials provided with the RFI) has been prepared by the Contracting Authority in relation to a Prior Information Notice (PIN) to conduct pre-procurement engagement activities with the supply market.

- This RFI summarises certain aspects of the procurement but does not purport to:
 - contain complete descriptions of it; nor
 - to be all inclusive or contain all the information that a bidder may require when determining whether to submit a response to the RFI.
- If potential suppliers are unclear as to the instructions for the response, this should be raised with the Contracting Authority as a clarification through the e-Sourcing System email box account: DgC.E-Commercial.systems@defra.gov.uk.
- No representation or warranty, express or implied, is or will be made, and no responsibility or liability is or will be accepted by the Contracting Authority or any of its advisors as to the accuracy, adequacy or completeness of the information within this RFI.
- This RFI is not intended to form the basis of any investment decision or other evaluation by the recipient(s) and does not constitute and should not be considered as a recommendation by any person in connection with the project. Each party to whom this RFI is made available should, at its own cost and expense, make its own independent assessment of the project after making such investigation as it may deem necessary.
- Potential suppliers should note that this RFI in no way commits the Contracting Authority to use an OJEU procedure as a Route to Market (RTM).
- Potential Suppliers should note that this RFI and/or formal commencement of this procurement and/or any further presentations given (including this RFI) in no way commits the Contracting Authority to award any contract relating to the Programme.
- This RFI and any information provided to you is confidential and subject to copyright and may not be published, reproduced, copied, distributed or disclosed to any person without the prior written consent of the Authority.

- The Contracting Authority shall not be liable for any costs or expenses of any Potential Supplier in relation to any matter in connection with this RFI or the Project howsoever incurred, including the evaluation of the service opportunity, the award, or any proposal for the award of the Contract or negotiation of the associated contractual agreements.

Any responses are to help the Contracting Authority gather information about this type of service, which may be available in the marketplace and to help inform our potential requirement/RTM.

Please be advised that:

- this opportunity is offered entirely without prejudice,
- it is not a sales opportunity,
- it is for information purposes only to help inform our potential requirement.

2. Background

The Contracting Authority is seeking a supplier to provide expertise in marine data management and support services for the MERMAN database. The service will ensure delivery of quality-assured marine environmental data to relevant parties to provide an evidence-base underpinning policy decisions within the UK and Europe.

This shall include undertaking minor enhancements to the MERMAN database (for example, adjusting data validation rules, updating reference data and spreadsheet templates, and updating the station dictionary), as necessary, (estimate 10 instances, per annum), coordination of data submissions and transfer of quality-controlled data in a timely manner to International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) and European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet) and supporting data requests by other third parties. These requirements, defined by Defra and members of the Clean Safe Seas Evidence Group (CSSEG), have been successfully delivered between 2006-2022 and there must be a seamless transition from the old system to the new.

The MERMAN database is currently being redesigned to allow the system to incorporate new data types, respond effectively to changes in ICES submission requirements, act interoperably with other marine data systems, and streamline data validation processes. This will ensure the timely availability of marine environmental data to meet national and international reporting obligations, to inform policy decision-making, and to meet Q-FAIR (Quality, Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) data management principles.



The above is neither an exhaustive nor a final set of requirements. It is subject to development prior to any potential subsequent contract opportunity notice utilising the outputs from the RFI responses.

3. Questions

To inform the Contracting Authority's understanding of what the market can deliver please answer the following questions. In doing so please use your discretion as to the level of detail you wish to provide Your responses will not be treated as a commitment by the Contracting Authority to award a future contract.

Q1. Scope of service

- (i) Could you please provide your comments on the attached draft requirements (listed in the "Background" section of this document), highlighting whether you consider any of these requirements could be challenging to provide.
- (ii) Could you identify if you consider there to be any omissions in the requirements given the scope of the type of service we are looking for?
- (iii) What is your familiarisation and/or experience with systems required to manage government marine processes, systems, data and reporting needs?

Q2. Costs

- (i) Please provide a rough order of magnitude (ROM) for the cost of the transitioning service and the capacity of the time frame for the services, and what, if any, would be the expectation of the Contracting Authority resource to support in these transition activities? Please list any assumptions you have made in calculating this ROM cost.

Q3. Data and Development

- i) Where are your data centres located for the webpage?
- ii) What is your approach to gathering client feedback to inform future updates and developments of your services?

Q4. Technical

- (i) Do you have existing website(s) that meet the current Government Accessibility Regulations [Understanding accessibility requirements for public sector bodies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Please can you confirm that the website will conform to these standards?](#)
- (i) It may be that we use the government Model Service Contract template (or a variation of – short etc.), do you have any concerns with this form of contract and if so, why? The latest version can be found [via this link.](#)

4. RFI Next Steps, Timescales and Contact Details

Following receipt of responses, we intend to review the responses and will only be used for reasons outlined in this RFI document.

Suppliers should highlight in their response to this RFI any specific information that they consider commercially sensitive.

An outline of next steps/future activities and timescales is included below.

RFI issued	25 January 2023
Supplier RFI response deadline	28 February 2023
RTM and Potential Opportunity of ITT submission	**This is an indication to approach the market early March 2023

Please send all queries and responses via email to

DgC.E-Commercial.systems@defra.gov.uk

no later than 12:00 BST on 28 February 2023.