



Mini Competition

**Mini Competition against an existing Framework Agreement (MC)
on behalf of **Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)****

**Subject UK SBS **Evaluation of support for early career researchers
(ESRs)****

Sourcing reference number **FWMRCR17053NERC**

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Section 1 – About UK Shared Business Services

UK Shared Business Services

UK SBS delivers shared business services to its owners; BEIS and its Partner Organisations.

We work behind the scenes, providing shared and specialist services to help reduce costs, improve quality and efficiency, to the benefit of UK taxpayers.

We provide HR & Payroll, Finance, Procurement, IT and Property Asset Management services to BEIS and its partner organisations – to enable our customers to focus on their core activities and make the most of their available budgets. Every day, we are supporting world-renowned scientists and researchers, policy makers and agencies that support UK jobs and growth, highlight UK science and innovation, and promote the UK as a global leader internationally. Our customers – the UK Research Councils, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and its partner organisations – are working on vital, life-changing projects ranging from Dementia Research, the Antarctic Research and UK Space programmes to the award winning UK Pavilion (the Hive) at the 2015 Milan Expo.

For more info, please visit our website: <http://www.ukpbs.co.uk/Pages/default.aspx>

Section 2 – About Our Customer

Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)

NERC is the UK's main agency for funding and managing research, training and knowledge exchange in the environmental sciences.

NERC's work covers the full range of atmospheric, Earth, biological, terrestrial and aquatic science, from the deep oceans to the upper atmosphere and from the poles to the equator.

The organisation coordinates some of the world's most exciting research projects, tackling major issues such as climate change, environmental influences on human health, the genetic make-up of life on Earth, and much more.

Working internationally, NERC have bases at some of the most hostile places on the planet; running a fleet of research ships and aircraft and investing in satellite technology to monitor gradual environmental change on a global scale. NERC provide forewarning of, and solutions to, the key environmental challenges facing society.

Examples of funded research

- Showing the importance of mature tropical forests to the global climate.
- Developing a safer and cleaner way to mine gold by reducing the use of mercury.
- Studying the hole in the ozone layer - discovered by our British Antarctic Survey - and monitoring climate change.
- Playing a major role in the International Census of Marine Life that monitors our oceans.

NERC also runs six organisations of world renown:

- British Antarctic Survey, in Cambridge.
- British Geological Survey, in Nottingham.
- National Oceanography Centre, in Southampton.
- Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, in Oxfordshire.
- National Centre for Atmospheric Science, in Leeds.
- National Centre for Earth Observation, Swindon.

www.nerc.ac.uk

Section 3 - Working with UK Shared Business Services Ltd.

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

Section 3 – Contact details		
3.1	Customer Name and address	Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) Polaris House North Star Avenue Swindon SN2 1EU
3.2	Buyer name	Liz Vincent
3.3	Buyer contact details	research@uksbs.co.uk
3.4	Estimated value of the Opportunity	£20,000 excluding VAT
3.5	Process for the submission of clarifications and Bids	<p>All correspondence shall be submitted within the Emptoris e-sourcing tool. Guidance Notes to support the use of Emptoris is available here.</p> <p>Please note submission of a Bid to any email address including the Buyer <u>will</u> result in the Bid <u>not</u> being considered.</p>

Section 3 - Timescales		
3.6	Date of Issue of Mini Competition to all Bidders	12 th April 2017
3.7	Latest date/time Mini Competition clarification questions should be received through Emptoris messaging system	20 th April 2017 14:00
3.8	Latest date/time Mini Competition clarification answers should be sent to all potential Bidders by the Buyer through Emptoris	25 th April 2017
3.9	Latest date/time Mini Competition Bid shall be submitted through Emptoris	4 th May 2017 14:00
3.10	Anticipated rejection of unsuccessful Bids date	15 th May 2017
3.12	Anticipated Award Date	15 th May 2107

3.13	Anticipated Call Off Contract Start Date	17 th May 2017
3.14	Anticipated Call Off Contract End Date	31 st December 2017
3.15	Bid Validity Period	60 Working Days
3.16	Framework and Lot the procurement should be based on	RM1086 Market Research Framework Lot 6

Section 4 – Specification

1. Introduction

The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) is the largest funder of environmental science in the UK. NERC invest £300 million each year in research, training and innovation through UK universities and research centres. NERC-funded scientists study and monitor the whole planet from pole to pole, from deep Earth and oceans to upper atmosphere and space.

NERC's vision is to place environmental science at the heart of responsible management of our planet. NERC's goals are to fund excellent, peer reviewed environmental science that helps us:

- understand and predict how our planet works
- manage our environment responsibly as we pursue new ways of living, doing business, escaping poverty and growing economies

NERC Head Office (HO) in Swindon is responsible for the management of NERC's science and innovation funding portfolio, managing and coordinating NERC's corporate communications activities, providing corporate support services such as HR, Finance and IT and coordinating NERC's business performance management and governance activities.

This specification relates to the activities of NERC's Research Careers team which is responsible for management of NERC's postgraduate training and fellowships funding portfolios.

2. Aims

NERC has a responsibility under its Royal Charter to promote and support research across the range of disciplines within its remit and to provide the trained scientists to do so.

NERC is undertaking an evaluation of its support for Early Career Researchers (ECRs) to determine whether current strategy and activities are effective for maintaining a healthy research base for the environmental sciences, and ensuring the training and opportunities available for NERC ECRs are appropriate for facilitating success in the broad range of careers they enter.

This evaluation will be informed by a broad range of information concerning NERC's ECR community which consists of a large number of individuals diffuse across a broad range of UK Research Organisations. It is beyond the capacity of NERC HO to collect these data so this tendering exercise is to identify an organisation able to independently source these detailed data on NERC's ECR community. This information will complement data currently held by NERC to inform its analysis of its support for ECRs.

3. Objectives

Objective 1: With NERC HO input, to lead the development and completion of the data collection exercise and provide an independent and detailed analysis of the challenges facing the NERC and broader environmental science early career researcher communities (here defined as postdoctoral with fewer than 8 years' full time experiences).

Objective 2: Provide an independent and detailed analysis of the data collected under objective 1 above to identify the key challenges facing NERC and NERC-relevant ECRs.

Objective 3: Presentation of findings to the NERC Science Board and Training Advisory Board.

4. Background to the Requirement

The group procured will work with the Research Careers team at NERC, who manage NERC's investments concerning PhD studentships and postgraduate training, and fellowships.

NERC holds data relating to its Fellowships and PhD studentships relevant to the demographic component of the data gathering exercise.

Data falling under the sensitive personal data components of the Data Protection Act will be collected and analysed through this exercise.

5. Scope

What is to be included linked to the objectives above:

1. Collection and detailed analysis of:

Demographic information concerning the UK Early Career Researcher population relevant to NERC remit and feedback from this population concerning a wide range of issues. Currently, more than 50 UK Research Organisations receive NERC funding to support research activities and the ECR population relevant to this exercise will be diffuse across these organisations. For the purposes of this evaluation an ECR is defined as any individual employed within a research capacity with fewer than eight years' full-time postdoctoral experience. Relevant to this community, the following information will be collected through a newly developed and bespoke data collection exercise developed by the tendered organisation with input from NERC staff:

- Demographic information for the NERC and broader environmental science ECR community to include: key characteristics (age, gender, etc.), discipline, research and working history, and information concerning their current position, such as personal network size, etc.

- Career and destinations data: preferred career, destinations, starting salary information vs employees from other backgrounds, contract information (e.g. duration of current appointment).
- Skills and Training feedback: information concerning skills needs of ECRs and the training they are able to access, and what they consider to be gaps in their current support.
- Feedback from a broad range of employers and stakeholders in NERC research regarding their needs and demands relevant to ECRs.
- Outputs (research and other metrics of value to NERC, such as impact outcomes) from a broad range of NERC funding programmes separated by scheme, discipline and grant type.
- Available funding and opportunities for fellows and other ECRs, both NERC and broader.
- Classification of NERC PhD students, fellowships and ECRs against the NERC research portfolio.
- Other relevant information as appropriate.

2. Provide an independent and detailed analysis of the data collected under 5. Scope, point 1. above to identify the key challenges facing NERC and NERC-relevant ECRs, including but not limited to:

- Key trends relevant to demographic groups within the wide ECR community and between different groups within the ECR population, such as different disciplines (e.g. ecologists vs. geologists)
- Destination trends of individuals within these communities and the factors affecting these
- Training available to these populations and the gaps within this training relevant to their perceived and actual skills gaps.
- Employer skills needs relevant to postdoctoral candidates with a postdoctoral environmental science background
- The metrics of success (research, impact, and other) arising from these communities relative to other comparable NERC programmes, such as research grants.
- Trends and availability of funding and research opportunities for ECRs.
- Linkages between the above.

3. Presentation of findings to the NERC Science Board and Training Advisory Board:

- Work with NERC Research Careers team to present data analysis and findings in a suitable format for discussion and outcomes workshops with two NERC Strategic Advisory Boards.
- Present the outputs in a consumable format for informed audiences.
- Work with NERC HO staff to produce a high level, public facing report that includes case studies and infographics, where appropriate.

What is excluded:

- Analysis or assessment of other NERC research and training schemes.

6. Requirement

Mandatory

- Completion of the data collection exercise to include the data identified under **5. Scope** above.
- Provide an independent and detailed analysis of these data relevant to the aims stated under element 2 under *Scope* **above**.
- Translation of detailed data analysis into consumable information.
- Contribute to the preparation of materials for workshops.
- Must not hold any form of conflict of interest with the NERC community.
- All activities completed must be treated as confidential until confirmed otherwise.

Desirable

- Detailed knowledge of Higher Education, Environmental Science Research and/or Research Council funding schemes.
- Production of infographics and other materials to be published in the public domain.

For the purposes of price evaluation please provide costings for the production of infographics detailed in the price schedule which will give the potential maximum value of the contract. On inception, we expect discussion around the production of infographics and anticipate there could be some fluctuation following the initial bid estimate.

7. Timetable

There are a number of milestones related to the completion of this exercise. A timetable identifying these milestones is included below alongside additional information concerning the activities that must be completed at each stage.

Task Completion Date	Activity	Details
Mid-June 2017	Develop and prepare data collection surveys	Working with NERC and the Working Group, to develop two data collection surveys comprising one to collect the information listed under 1. above for ECRs and a parallel survey of the other stakeholders in ECR investment (employers, research organisations, etc.).
September 1 st 2017	Data collection exercise complete	All data under 1. above collected following a bespoke data collection exercise led and delivered by the tendered organisation with NERC HO staff input.
October 15 th 2017	Initial data analysis	Initial data analysis complete and papers prepared in collaboration with NERC staff to

		inform working group meeting.
November 1 st 2017	Working Group Meeting	Meeting between tendered organisation, NERC HO staff, and NERC Science Board and Training Advisory Board working group to explore data following initial analysis by tendered organisation. Data and initial analysis outcomes to be distributed to meeting attendees two weeks prior to meeting. Meeting to explore initial outcomes and provide guidance on areas for deeper exploration.
November 30 th 2017	Data analysis complete	Analysis of data complete and key outcomes identified taking into consideration input from the working group meeting.
December 15 th 2017	First outcomes published	Initial outcomes (trends, recommendations, and ideas) confirmed and published. Tendered organisation to work with NERC HO to prepare published content.
December 31 st 2017	Handover complete	Tendering organisation to complete a handover of data, analyses, etc., arising from the evaluation to NERC ahead of finishing their engagement with the evaluation.

Total Timing: April 2017 – December 2017.

All of the above activities are to be considered fundamental to the success of this evaluation.

Section 5 – Evaluation of Bids

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

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

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

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

Pass / fail criteria		
Questionnaire	Q No.	Question subject
Commercial	FOI1.1	Freedom of Information Exemptions
Commercial	AW1.1	Form of Bid
Commercial	AW1.3	Certificate of Bona Fide Bid
Price	AW5.5	E Invoicing
Price	AW5.6	Implementation of E-Invoicing
Quality	AW6.1	Compliance to the Specification
-	-	Invitation to Quote – received on time within e-sourcing tool

Scoring criteria			
<p>Evaluation Justification Statement In consideration of this particular requirement UK SBS has decided to evaluate Potential Providers by adopting the weightings/scoring mechanism detailed within this Mini Competition. UK SBS considers these weightings to be in line with existing best practice for a requirement of this type.</p>			
Questionnaire	Q No.	Question subject	Maximum Marks
Price	AW5.2	Price	40%
Quality	PROJ1.1	Understanding	15%
Quality	PROJ1.2	Project Plan and Risk Management	15%
Quality	PROJ1.3	Methodology	15%
Quality	PROJ1.4	Project Team and Caplbility to Deliver	15%

Evaluation of criteria

Non-Price elements

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

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

Example if a Bidder scores 60 from the available 100 points this will equate to 12% by using the following calculation: Score/Total Points available multiplied by 20 ($60/100 \times 20 = 12$)

Where an evaluation criterion is worth 10% then the 0-100 score achieved will be multiplied by 10.

Example if a Bidder scores 60 from the available 100 points this will equate to 6% by using the following calculation: Score/Total Points available multiplied by 10 ($60/100 \times 10 = 6$)

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

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

0	The Question is not answered or the response is completely unacceptable.
10	Extremely poor response – they have completely missed the point of the question.
20	Very poor response and not wholly acceptable. Requires major revision to the response to make it acceptable. Only partially answers the requirement, with major deficiencies and little relevant detail proposed.
40	Poor response only partially satisfying the selection question requirements with deficiencies apparent. Some useful evidence provided but response falls well short of expectations. Low probability of being a capable supplier.
60	Response is acceptable but remains basic and could have been expanded upon. Response is sufficient but does not inspire.
80	Good response which describes their capabilities in detail which provides high levels of assurance consistent with a quality provider. The response includes a full description of techniques and measurements currently employed.
100	Response is exceptional and clearly demonstrates they are capable of meeting the requirement. No significant weaknesses noted. The response is compelling in its description of techniques and measurements currently employed, providing full assurance consistent with a quality provider.

All questions will be scored based on the above mechanism. Please be aware that the final score returned may be different as there will be multiple evaluators and their individual scores after a moderation process will be averaged (mean) to determine your final score.

Example

Evaluator 1 scored your bid as 60
Evaluator 2 scored your bid as 60
Evaluator 3 scored your bid as 50
Evaluator 4 scored your bid as 50
Your final score will $(60+60+50+50) \div 4 = 55$

Price elements will be judged on the following criteria.

The lowest price for a response which meets the pass criteria shall score 100. All other bids shall be scored on a pro rata basis in relation to the lowest price. The score is then subject to a multiplier to reflect the percentage value of the price criterion.

For example - Bid 1 £100,000 scores 100,
Bid 2 £120,000 differential of £20,000 or 20% remove 20% from price scores 80
Bid 3 £150,000 differential £50,000 remove 50% from price scores 50.
Bid 4 £175,000 differential £75,000 remove 75% from price scores 25.
Bid 5 £200,000 differential £100,000 remove 100% from price scores 0.
Bid 6 £300,000 differential £200,000 remove 100% from price scores 0.

Where the scoring criterion is worth 50% then the 0-100 score achieved will be multiplied by 50

In the example if a supplier scores 80 from the available 100 points this will equate to 40% by using the following calculation: $\text{Score}/\text{Total Points} \times 50$ ($80/100 \times 50 = 40$)

The lowest score possible is 0 even if the price submitted is more than 100% greater than the lowest price.

Once the evaluation process and due diligence is complete, should the result of the process result in a tied place(s) then the supplier(s) who scored the highest total in the Quality criterion shall be considered the successful supplier and shall be awarded the opportunity .

Should the above still result in a tie we will go to a secondary tie decision which will be who scored the highest total in the Price criterion (Question AW5.2) they shall be considered the successful supplier and shall be awarded the opportunity.

Section 6 – Evaluation questionnaire

Bidders should note that the evaluation questionnaire is located within the **e-sourcing questionnaire**.

Guidance on completion of the questionnaire is available at <http://www.ukpbs.co.uk/services/procure/Pages/supplier.aspx>

PLEASE NOTE THE QUESTIONS ARE NOT NUMBERED SEQUENTIALLY

Section 7 – General Information

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

DO:

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

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

DO NOT

- 7.12 Do not cut and paste from a previous document and forget to change the previous details such as the previous buyer's name.
- 7.13 Do not attach 'glossy' brochures that have not been requested, they will not be read unless we have asked for them. Only send what has been requested and only send supplementary information if we have offered the opportunity so to do.
- 7.14 Do not share the Procurement documents, they are confidential and should not be shared with anyone without the Buyers written permission.
- 7.15 Do not seek to influence the procurement process by requesting meetings or contacting UK SBS or the Customer to discuss your Bid. If your Bid requires clarification the Buyer will contact you.
- 7.16 Do not contact any UK SBS staff or Customer staff without the Buyers written permission or we may reject your Bid.
- 7.17 Do not collude to fix or adjust the price or withdraw your Bid with another Party as we will reject your Bid.
- 7.18 Do not offer UK SBS or Customer staff any inducement or we will reject your Bid.
- 7.19 Do not seek changes to the Bid after responses have been submitted and the deadline for Bids to be submitted has passed.
- 7.20 Do not cross reference answers to external websites or other parts of your Bid, the cross references and website links will not be considered.
- 7.21 Do not exceed word counts, the additional words will not be considered.
- 7.22 Do not make your Bid conditional on acceptance of your own Terms of Contract, as your Bid will be rejected.

Some additional guidance notes

- 7.23 All enquiries with respect to access to the e-sourcing tool and problems with functionality within the tool may be submitted to Crown Commercial Service (CCS – previously Government Procurement Service), Telephone 0345 010 3503.
- 7.24 Bidders will be specifically advised where attachments are permissible to support a question response within the e-sourcing tool. Where they are not permissible any attachments submitted will not be considered.
- 7.25 Question numbering is not sequential and all questions which require submission are included in the Section 6 Evaluation Questionnaire.
- 7.26 Any Contract offered may not guarantee any volume of work or any exclusivity of supply.
- 7.27 We do not guarantee to award any Contract as a result of this procurement
- 7.28 All documents issued or received in relation to this procurement shall be the property of UK SBS.
- 7.29 We can amend any part of the procurement documents at any time prior to the latest date / time Bids shall be submitted through Emptoris.
- 7.30 If you are a Consortium you must provide details of the Consortiums structure.
- 7.31 Bidders will be expected to comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or your Bid will be rejected.
- 7.32 Bidders should note the Government's transparency agenda requires your Bid and any Contract entered into to be published on a designated, publicly searchable web site. By submitting a response to this Mini Competition Bidders are agreeing that their Bid and Contract may be made public
- 7.33 Your bid will be valid for 60 days or your Bid will be rejected.
- 7.34 Bidders may only amend the Special terms if you can demonstrate there is a legal or statutory reason why you cannot accept them. If you request changes to the Contract and UK SBS fail to accept your legal or statutory reason is reasonably justified we may reject your Bid.
- 7.35 We will let you know the outcome of your Bid evaluation and where requested will provide a written debrief of the relative strengths and weaknesses of your Bid.
- 7.36 If you fail mandatory pass / fail criteria we will reject your Bid.
- 7.37 Bidders are required to use IE8, IE9, Chrome or Firefox in order to access the functionality of the Emptoris e-sourcing tool.

- 7.38 Bidders should note that if they are successful with their proposal UK SBS reserves the right to ask additional compliancy checks prior to the award of any Call Off Contract. In the event of a Bidder failing to meet one of the compliancy checks UK SBS may decline to proceed with the award of the Call Off Contract to the successful Bidder.
- 7.39 All timescales are set using a 24 hour clock and are based on British Summer Time or Greenwich Mean Time, depending on which applies at the point when Date and Time Bids shall be submitted through Emptoris
- 7.40 All Central Government Departments and their Executive Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies are subject to control and reporting within Government. In particular, they report to the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury for all expenditure. Further, the Cabinet Office has a cross-Government role delivering overall Government policy on public procurement - including ensuring value for money and related aspects of good procurement practice.

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

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

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

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

USEFUL INFORMATION LINKS

- [Emptoris Training Guide](#)
- [Emptoris e-sourcing tool](#)
- [Contracts Finder](#)
- [Tenders Electronic Daily](#)
- [Equalities Act introduction](#)
- [Bribery Act introduction](#)
- [Freedom of information Act](#)