**SPECIFICATION**

**FOR**

**ELECTRONIC PROCUREMENT SYSTEM**

1 Background

1.1 Nottingham Community Housing Association (NCHA) is registered as a charitable social landlord under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 and with the Regulator of Social Housing.

1.2 NCHA’s principle activities are the management, maintenance, improvement and development of social housing together with the provision of care and support services for those people within communities across the East Midlands with additional needs.

1.3 With just under 10,000 homes and an ambition to improve the value, social value and sustainability through its procurement activity, a comprehensive and market leading electronic procurement system is now required.

2 Introduction

2.1 The organisation is undergoing a major shift in its approach to procurement, employing a new Procurement and Value Manager, changing procurement thresholds to align with Public Contract Regulations (PCRs) and embedding a more detailed infrastructure to support colleagues to make the right procurement choices. This new e procurement system will be a cornerstone of this shift.

2.2 NCHA has approximately 65 users registered on its current e tendering system – Geometra. The majority of these users access the system to run low value request for quotations (RFQs) from suppliers on the Approved List.

2.3 NCHA requires an off the shelf, web hosted and secure end to end procurement system and the contract will include implementation, licencing and hosting, maintenance and support.

3 Scope

3.1 NCHA requires a system that can provide the following functionality:

* E tendering including an easy to use RFQ function
* DPS/Framework: initial set up and mini competition functionality
* Electronic evaluation
* Contract/supplier management
* Contract Register

3.2 The system should be able to be used seamlessly, for example a contract resulting from a tender that can be linked through to the Contract Register and then through to contract management.

3.3 The system must be easy to use and intuitive for both procurement and non-procurement colleagues. Initial training should be supported by in depth and content specific help guides/videos etc. within the system.

3.4 The supplier must be ready to manage the implementation process with support from the NCHA Contract Manager. Following go live, NCHA expects the supplier to provide a comprehensive helpdesk functionality for both buyer users and suppliers.

3.5 NCHA expects to work with the supplier as a partner throughout both the implementation and term of the contract.

4 Term

4.1 The initial term of the contract will be 5 (five) years with extension options of a further 2 (two) periods of 3 (three) years to be mutually agreed between the parties.

5 Essential Functionality

5.1 Tailored procurement templates for the full range of PCR processes which are linked to the NCHA Financial Regulation thresholds. This should include either a pre-loaded or ability to load the standard SSQ. There should also be ability to create NCHA specific procurement templates for bespoke processes.

5.2 The choice of templates should be managed through a checklist type approach to improve compliance and consistency.

5.3 Pre-loaded reports and the ability to create reports using any field within the system without requiring specialist knowledge. These reports must be able to be downloaded in a variety of formats, e.g. Excel.

5.4 There must be a comprehensive audit function covering both the buyer and the supplier side of the system and NCHA should have the ability to download audit reports as and when required either for internal governance or to respond to challenges. Linked to this, tenders/quotes should be ‘date stamped’ upon submission.

5.5 The system/supplier must be a recognised ‘E Sender’ so that procurement adverts are automatically published through Contracts Finder and Find my Tender.

5.6 There must be an easy to use RFQ function which can allow non procurement colleagues to run low value quotes with suppliers from the NCHA approved list.

5.7 NCHA requires a Contract Management function which links automatically to both the e procurement and contract/supplier management parts of the system.

5.8 The system must be easy to use from a supplier perspective with support being available from the supplier for initial supplier migration and ongoing supplier queries and problems.

5.9 The supplier should offer a helpdesk functionality available via both phone and email for both suppliers and buyers. The helpdesk should be available weekdays between 8.30 and 17.00.

5.10 The system must have a comprehensive contract management function which includes the ability to create contracts, performance manage those contracts and perform risks analyses. There should be the ability to set up automatic alerts for contract milestones (e.g. insurance renewals) and renewal dates. It should also be possible to share documents via the system, for example when a supplier wants to submit new financial data.

5.11 NCHA should have the ability to assign a super user/administrator role, this role should then have the ability to assign roles and modular access for other users.

5.12 Where required there must be the ability to provide external parties with access to the system on a procurement by procurement basis.

5.13 The evaluation function must be sufficient to allow individual and group evaluation and consensus scoring against a variety of question types including pass/fail. There should also be the ability to download scoring reports for internal governance and supplier feedback purposes.

5.14 The DPS function should be easy to use and allow for initial set up, ongoing supplier evaluation and mini competitions. There should be the ability to restrict mini competition access to suppliers on the relevant lot/framework agreement/DPS.

5.15 NCHA wants to be able to effectively manage its procurement related documents in the system via a folder/sub-folder system. There must also be the ability to upload key policies for suppliers to view and confirm that they have read the document and are compliant with its contents.

5.16 The system should provide a comprehensive messaging function between buyer users and suppliers. This should include the ability to send to all or to send to a few with attachments where necessary. Bidders who have withdrawn from the process should no longer receive messages. This should include an email notification on receipt of a message. NCHA also wants the ability to download a report detailing all the messages sent and received during a procurement process.

5.17 Where NCHA wishes to extend a closing date for receipt of quotes/tenders, there should be the ability to do so with an automatic message generated to all bidders who have registered their interest in the tender.

6 Desirable Functionality

6.1 Within the Contract Register, a change control function.

6.2 The ability to log helpdesk calls out of hours via email or a ticketing system.

6.3 A branded NCHA portal or the ability to join a Housing Association specific portal and access the suppliers already registered there.

6.4 To support the seamless nature of the system, the auto completion of information across modules/parts of the system where relevant, for example relevant contract information to be pre-populated into the Contract Register.

6.5 An internal messaging function to allow discussion between members of the procurement team.

6.6 The ability to access and download reports from the support/helpdesk function to support continuous improvement and contract management with the supplier.

6.7 Possibility of a single sign on functionality.

7 ICT Requirements

7.1 The supplier must offer secure hosting from within the UK with data stored and backed up from within the UK.

7.2 The system must be usable on at least the following browsers: Chrome

7.3 The system/supplier must be compliant with GDPR and Electronic Communication Regulations.

7.4 As the system will contain confidential data the supplier should have a nationally recognised security certification e.g. Cyber essentials, ISO27001 etc.

8 Implementation

8.1 NCHA holds a number of licences for its current system, the first of which expire on 3rd March. It therefore requires that at least the electronic tendering (including RFQ) part of the system be fully available and operational by that date at the latest.

8.2 Implementation should include the migration of archive procurements from the current system (Geometra) and the upload of the Contract Register which is an MS Excel file.

8.3 The migration of suppliers registered with Geometra must be fully supported by the supplier and automated if possible. Support should include initial contact, guidance and support through the registration process. The registration process itself should be as straightforward as possible taking into account the fact that many NCHA suppliers will not have experience in using an electronic procurement system.

8.4 At least 3 interactive training sessions should be provided as part of the implementation process, at the time of writing this specification it is expected that they will take place virtually. However, should it be possible for one or more of these training sessions to take place at NCHA offices, the supplier will be expected to support that requirement.

9 Support and Maintenance

9.1 Sections 5 and 6 above detail the helpdesk functionality required.

9.2 System upgrades and patches are expected to be provided as part of the contract price when required.

9.3 NCHA expects that the supplier will provide a test environment, both as a sand pit for new users and to trial new processes, but also to test major upgrades. This environment should be provided as part of the contract cost.

9.4 NCHA expects that the system will maintain at least 99.6% availability and this will requirement will be a KPI. To support this, it is the expectation that any upgrades or maintenance to the system will take place outside core office hours.

10 Contract Management

10.1 NCHA will appoint its Procurement and Value Manager as the Contract Manager for this contract. It is expected that the supplier will appoint a Contract Manager and Deputy with experience of managing system contracts for Housing Associations and/or within the East Midlands region.

10.2 Contract management meetings will take place monthly for the first 6 months and thereafter quarterly unless performance requires more regular meetings. These meetings will take place virtually to reduce the cost and environmental impact of travel. NCHA expects the supplier Contract Manager to make themselves available for these meetings wherever possible and where that is not possible, to make their designated Deputy available. This is required to ensure consistency and good knowledge of the contract and the requirement.

10.3 KPIs to be discussed as part of contract management will include:

10.3.1 System availability to be maintained at 99.6% or higher.

10.3.2 All urgent helpdesk contacts (from both suppliers and NCHA) to be resolved within 24 hours.

10.3.3 All other helpdesk contacts (from both suppliers and NCHA) to be resolved within 3 working days.

10.3.4 General system related queries raised through the NCHA Contract Manager to the supplier Contract Manager/Deputy to be responded to within 3 working days.

10.3.5 Required system updates, for example as a result of a change in procurement regulation/thresholds, to take place within the timescales set for such updates.

10.3.6 User satisfaction (both suppliers and NCHA users) to be maintained at 90% or above. The measure of this satisfaction will be agreed between NCHA and the supplier before contract commencement.

10.4 Further KPIs may be agreed between the supplier and NCHA as necessary and NCHA reserves the right to ask for additional performance monitoring where performance falls below the minimum standards defined above.

11 Added Value

11.1 NCHA wants to work with a supplier who understands public sector procurement and who will therefore provide added value whether through customer forums, using customer ideas to generate improvement, provision of webinars etc.

11.2 As a social housing provider, NCHA is committed to improving social value for its tenants, residents and service users. The core commitments can be found by visiting:

<https://www.ncha.org.uk/about-ncha/projects-and-commitments/> and an Environment Standard is just in the process of being agreed. Suppliers will expected to show a commitment to the same standards.

12 Exit Strategy / Handover at End of Contract

12.1 At the end of the contract term, the supplier will be expected to work with NCHA’s new supplier in a helpful and effective manner to ensure that the transition between the systems is as smooth as possible.

12.2 In particular, data from the supplier’s system should be made available to NCHA and/or the new supplier in a form to be agreed so that it can be uploaded into any new system. Any reasonable costs for this data transfer should be agreed with NCHA in advance.