

Invitation to Tender (ITT):

Strategic Communications and Public Affairs

Reference	FRC2020 – 098 Strategic Communications and Public Affairs
Date	November 2020

1. Background

The Financial Reporting Council (FRC) regulates auditors, accountants and actuaries and sets the UK's Corporate Governance and Stewardship Codes. We seek to promote transparency and integrity in business; our work is aimed at investors and others who rely on company accounts, audit and high-quality risk management. As the Competent Authority for audit in the UK, the FRC sets auditing and ethical standards and monitors and enforces audit quality.

2. Overview

This ITT covers FRC's requirement for a portfolio of Strategic Communication and Public Affairs Services over a 6 – 9 months period.

• Introduction

The Financial Reporting Council (FRC) is going through a period of significant and sustained change. In the last two years three independent reviews have made far-reaching recommendations to the Government which impact on our purpose and objectives, our work programmes and the roles and responsibilities of those we regulate amongst other key issues.

The FRC is transforming into a new organisation known as the Audit, Reporting and Governance Authority (ARGA) with new powers and a new remit. While the formal transformation is dependent on Government legislation, the FRC has already made significant progress in its journey towards the fit for purpose regulator envisaged by Sir John Kingman's independent review.

The Requirement

- An agency offering an integrated approach to strategic communications and public affairs with extensive experience in helping public interest bodies with engagement programmes with all of its stakeholders to improve/influence perceptions
- Experience in supporting organisations undertaking extensive change programmes as the FRC transitions into a new regulator ARGA
- Creative approaches to creating content for a range of audiences through a number of traditional communication and digital channels and platforms
- Strong experience in supporting financial services organisations both in the corporate and regulatory world in times of public and government scrutiny/regulatory change
- Expertise in navigating government departments and parliamentary groups including developing briefings for offices and Select Committees and measuring influence
- Demonstrable experience in designing and supporting communications campaigns targeted at business, professional services and/or government
- Ability to provide media training and committee appearance practice for senior staff
- Excellent written skills to summarise key research and findings into easily digestible collateral, and design thinking to recommend where infographics/visual content will have greater impact
- Provide insights and market knowledge to suggest and promote thought leadership opportunities for the FRC
- Stakeholder mapping of UK media, regulatory and political landscapes and monitoring/measurement of stakeholder perceptions of the activities and influence of the FRC and our communications

Anticipated core work packages

- Media mapping planning and preparation of strategic activity e.g. thought leadership opportunities and op-eds
- Reviewing content for external stakeholders and redrafting/producing supplementary content where required
- Drafting thought leadership, commentaries, speeches and op eds where required
- Providing advice, intelligence and idea to support the internal and external communications function
- Horizon mapping of parliamentary, government and regulatory landscape to suggest action plans and engagement activity with key decision makers
- Provide intelligence and insight into developing themes and areas of focus and interest and suggest ideas on how the FRC can participate or lead engagement to influence
- Establish a rolling database of MPs and key influencers at government departments and regulators
- Support appearances at the BEIS Select Committee
- Plan and create collateral for launch of ARGAs as well as support a communications campaign for key stakeholders both externally and internally

- The Agreement will run for the period January 2021 – 31st December 2021 however it is envisaged that the bulk of the Services will be required over the first 6 – 9 months.
- We estimate an annual spend will be approximately £60,000 - £100,000 over the duration.
- For the avoidance of doubt, the anticipated packages of work are below, however there is no spend commitment under this proposed Agreement.

We expect our partner to have; -

- **Significant expertise and experience in integrated strategic communications in professional services and/or regulatory space**
- **Experience of working for a public interest body**
- **Deep networks across the City, national and trade media, Whitehall and government**
- **Understanding of the audit reform agenda and associated ecosystems, as well as the UK and international political and standards agenda which may influence corporate governance more widely**
- **Can provide collateral and communications support to brief to a high quality and with fast turnaround**
- **Teams are well resourced with diversity of experience and outlook**
- **Cost commitment (attainment of Value for Money)**

- In addition, suppliers should strive for good practice relating to information security, financial management and business continuity. FRC does not condone any activity which constitutes modern slavery or human trafficking under the Modern Slavery Act (MSA) 2015, we expect our suppliers (and supply chain) to maintain the same approach and to have policies and procedures in place to minimise the risk of modern slavery occurring.

In response to the ITT tenderers should complete the Tender Response Document which request that tenderers demonstrate how the FRC's requirement will be met. FRC will use a mixture of quality and commercial as the evaluation components to assess Tender Submission.

Evaluation

The key evaluations areas :-

EVALUATION AREA	OUR REQUIREMENT	EVALAUTION REQUIREMENT
Understanding of key Agenda	Our transition to ARGAs is fundamentally important, we therefore are seeking to partner with an organisation that has an understanding of the audit reform agenda and associated ecosystems, as well as the UK and international political and standards agenda which may influence corporate governance more widely.	Please outline your organisation's understanding in this area and how your organisation has developed this understanding (for example, previous clients, research, key resources background etc)
Expertise and Experience	<p>To deliver our requirement to a high standard aligned with our goals we are seeking to partner with an organization that has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant transferrable expertise and experience in integrated strategic communications in professional services and/or regulatory space Transferable experience of working for a public interest body Relevant experience in designing social media programmes for senior management across several issues 	To demonstrate how your organization can meet our requirement please provide example of work done for another financial services organisation or regulator (i.e. similar clients) and result of influencing activities. Your response should include proof points of spheres of relevant influence and experience, and metrics used to measure successful impact/influence.
Industry knowledge and networks	<p>We require a partner that has: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> breadth and depth of industry knowledge and networks, including but not limited to strong relationships with key media commentators such as Financial Times (FT), Times, The Mail, The Guardian and the BBC; a combination of ad hoc and regular intelligence about media, regulators, and government departments. 	To demonstrate how your organization can meet our requirement please provide examples of market intelligence and insight that you have provided to previous clients, and your subsequent advice on strategy and tactics to deliver on corporate objectives and/or 'campaigns' undertaken for other clients either currently or historically and the impact on the client's objectives.
Methodology	The successful partner should have established (and be willing to enhance) existing methodologies to support the FRC requirement with high quality collateral and communication turned around at pace.	To demonstrate how your organization can meet our requirement please provide an outline of the existing methodology / approach to meeting the requirement of the clients brief. Please also indicate any enhancement you propose that would be beneficial to FRC.
Quality	The successful partner should have:	To demonstrate how your organization can meet our requirement please provide

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outstanding written skills to generate corporate content, thought leadership and research pieces with impact and authority Teams are well resourced with diversity of experience and outlook 	examples of written work across multiple channels, e.g. – op eds, speeches, thought leadership pieces – and to a range of audiences.
Commercial Cost commitment / Value for Money	<p>We anticipate that the core work packages involve a combination of strategic input and operational delivery, and therefore blends resources at various levels to achieve both (a) optimum value to FRC and (b) effective output(s).</p> <p>FRC is committed to delivering value for money.</p>	<p>For the core anticipated work package shown in “Anticipated work packages” we would ask suppliers to propose (and provide a high-level breakdown of the) cost. Your responses should reference how you have utilised this (blended) approach to deliver value for money for your client(s).</p> <p>Note: FRC expectation is to be able to deliver the core packages at the lower end of the total expenditure range. Our aim is to work in partnership with the successful supplier to agree any future work, so that it is targeted, responsive to changing needs and delivers value for money and impact for the organisation.</p>

Each response will be attributed a Poor, Fair, Good or Excellent score using the criteria below. This will result in a score applied to each Quality response.
Overall Maximum score 300 points.

Assessment	Scoring System	Score
Poor	Does not satisfy the requirement. Does not demonstrate the relevant ability, understanding, experience, skills, resource and quality measures required to provide the services, with sufficient evidence to support the response.	0
Fair	Satisfies the requirement. Demonstration by the bidder of the relevant ability, understanding, experience, skills, resource and quality measures required to provide the services, with sufficient evidence to support the response.	10
Good	Satisfies the requirement with minor additional benefits. Demonstration by the bidder of the relevant ability, understanding, experience, skills, resource and quality measures required to provide the services. Response identifies factors that will offer potential added value, with sufficient evidence to support the response.	30
Excellent	Satisfies the requirement with major additional benefits. Demonstration by the bidder of exceptional relevant ability, understanding, experience, skills, resource and quality measures required to provide the services. Sufficient evidence to fully support the response.	50

3. Use of ITT & publication

3.1.1. All documents contained in this ITT are confidential and must be used solely for the purposes of this ITT. The documents can only be passed on to third parties on a strictly 'need to know' basis for the purposes of the tenderer preparing and submitting a tender.

3.1.2. Tenderers **must not** undertake any publicity activity regarding the procurement within any section of the media

4. Questions & Clarifications

4.1.1. Tenderers may raise questions or seek clarification regarding any aspect of this further competition at any time prior to the tender clarification deadline.

4.1.2. Tenderers may raise questions or seek clarification within the timeframe by sending questions to procurement@frc.org.uk in the following format.

Nature of query / clarification	Query / Clarification

4.1.3. FRC will not enter exclusive discussions regarding the requirements of this ITT with tenderers.

4.1.4. To ensure that all tenderers have equal access to information regarding this tender opportunity, FRC will publish all its responses to questions raised by Tenderers on an anonymous basis.

4.1.5. Responses will be published in a questions and answers document to all Tenderers who have indicated that they wish to participate.

5. Timelines

Activity	Date/timeline
Invitation to tender issued	30/10/2020
Deadline for tender queries / clarifications	06/11/2020
Anticipated response to tender clarifications	11/11/2020
Deadline for receipt of tenders by 5.00pm	24/11/2020
Evaluation period (ITT)	25/11/2020 – 03/12/2020
Finalised/shortlist communication	04/12/2020
Tender clarification sessions period (if required)	w/c 09/12/2020 - 10/12/2020
Internal governance process	11/12/2020
Tender outcome communicated	w/c 14/12/2020
Contract issued, executed	w/c 14/12/2020
Contract commencements	18/12/2020

6. Conduct

- 6.1.1. The tenderer must not communicate to any person the tender price, even approximately, before the date of the contract award other than to obtain, in strict confidence, a price for insurance required to submit the tender.
- 6.1.2. The tenderer must not try to obtain any information about any other person's tender or proposed tender before the date of the contract award.
- 6.1.3. The tenderer must not make any arrangements with any other person about whether they should tender, or about their tender price.
- 6.1.4. The tenderer must not offer any incentive to any member of FRC's staff for doing or refraining from doing any act in relation to the tender.
- 6.1.5. If the tenderer engages in any of the activities set out in this paragraph or if FRC considers the tenderer's behaviour is in any way unethical FRC reserves the right to disqualify the tenderer from the procurement.
- 6.1.6. The tenderer represents and warrant that a conflict of interest check has been carried out and that check revealed no conflicts of interest.
- 6.1.7. Where a conflict of interest exists or arises or may exist or arise during the procurement process or following contract award the tenderer must inform FRC and submit proposals to avoid such conflicts.
- 6.1.8. Tenderers must obtain for themselves at their own responsibility and expense all information necessary for the preparation of tenders. FRC is not liable for any costs incurred by the tenderer as a result of the tendering procedure. Any work undertaken by the tenderer prior to the award of contract is a matter solely for the tenderer's own commercial judgement.

7. Due Diligence

- 7.1.1. While reasonable care has been taken in preparing the information in this ITT and any supporting documents, the information within the documents does not purport to be exhaustive nor has it been independently verified.
- 7.1.2. Neither FRC, nor its representatives, employees, agents or advisors:
 - makes any representation or warranty, express or implied, as to the accuracy, reasonableness or completeness of the ITT and supporting documents; or
 - Accepts any responsibility for the adequacy, accuracy or completeness of the information contained in the ITT and supporting documents nor shall any of them be liable for any loss or damage, other than in respect of fraudulent misrepresentation, arising as a result of reliance on such information or any subsequent communication.
- 7.1.3. It's the tenderer's sole responsibility to undertake such investigations and take such advice, including professional advice, as it considers appropriate in order to make decisions regarding the content of its tenders and in order to verify any information provided to it during the procurement process and to query any ambiguity, whether actual or potential.
- 7.1.4. It is a requirement that the successful supplier (i) comply with all applicable laws and regulations including, without limitation, the Bribery Act 2010, the Equality Act 2010 and the Modern Slavery Act 2015; and (ii) in addition to any contractual requirement(s), inform the FRC immediately upon becoming aware of any event (including actual or threatened court proceedings) which may impact upon the reputation of the FRC, whether or not connected with the Supplies and/or Services.

8. Submitting a Tender

8.1.1. Tenderers must submit their tender response within the deadline to procurement@frc.org.uk. FRC reserves the right to reject late tender responses.

8.1.2. Where a Tender Response is provided, potential providers must align their tender response with that format.

8.1.3. A Tender must remain valid and capable of acceptance by the Authority for a period of 90 days following the Tender Submission Deadline. A Tender with a shorter validity period may be rejected.

9. Evaluation

9.1.1. FRC will award the contract on the basis of the tender which best meets the evaluation criteria aligned to the requirements.

10. Acceptance of Tender & Notification of Award

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

10.1.2. FRC shall not be under any obligation to accept the lowest price tender or any tender and reserves the right to accept such portion or portions as it may decide, unless the tenderer includes a formal statement to the contrary in the tender. FRC also reserves the right to award more than one contract to fulfil the requirement.

10.1.3. The tenderer will be notified of the outcome of the tender submission at the earliest possible time.

10.1.4. Where the procurement process is subject to EU public procurement directives, a minimum standstill period of 10 calendar days will apply between communicating the award decision electronically to tenderers and awarding the contract.

10.1.5. Nothing in the documentation provided by FRC to the tenderer during this procurement or any communication between the tenderer and FRC or FRC's representatives, employees, agents or advisers shall be taken as constituting an offer to contract or a contract. No tender will be deemed to have been formally accepted until the successful tenderer has received a formal contract award letter from FRC.

11. Additional Information

11.1.1. Please use the attached Tender Response Document for your reply.

11.1.2. The Terms and Conditions that will apply to this proposed Agreement are attached (in the Tender Response Document). Suppliers should accept the T&C's with no material changes.

11.1.3. Additional details relating to the FRC

- <https://www.frc.org.uk/>
- <https://www.frc.org.uk/about-the-frc/procedures-and-policies/procurement>