



Pre-Tender Market Engagement – Phase 3 Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme

Authority: Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 Following previous market engagement activity in December 2016 and February 2017, this phase of Pre-Tender Market Engagement (PTME) seeks to:
- provide further information on the Authority's support service requirements in relation to the Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme;
 - update the market on the intended procurement approach;
 - update and share details of potential suppliers (where permitted) in order to maximise market networking opportunities.

2 PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 By March 2022, the Authority wants to achieve:
- More neighbourhood plans in force (over 2,100 groups have started the process so far, with over 360 successful referendums);
 - More neighbourhood plans that allocate sites for housing – more than half of plans;
 - Greater take-up of neighbourhood planning design policies, especially design codes;
 - Successful pilots on Neighbourhood Development Orders that support housing delivery and good quality design;
 - Pilots to explore the potential of using Community Infrastructure Levy to fund the production of plans where applicable, although this is subject to wider policy decisions.

3 PROCUREMENT APPROACH

- 3.1 The Authority anticipates that at least two separate competitions will be used to procure the support services necessary to deliver these objectives. The scope of the two competitions is anticipated to be as follows:
- 1) **Neighbourhood Planning Support Services** - procured via an open competition in accordance with Regulations 74 to 77 (the 'light-touch regime') of the Public Contract Regulations (2015);
 - 2) **Neighbourhood Planning Grant Administration Services** – procured via a call-off competition under Lot 1 of the Crown Commercial Service Grants and Programmes Services Framework (<http://ccs-agreements.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/contracts/rm949>).

4 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING SUPPORT SERVICES

KEY DELIVERABLES

4.1 This contract will require the provision of the following key services as a minimum:

4.1.1 **Basic support:** Available to all neighbourhood planning groups and will require the successful supplier to:

- Provide expert advice on neighbourhood planning, including technical enquiries and providing advice on procuring and commissioning technical planning services;
- Produce and share high quality neighbourhood planning case studies that reflect and highlight tangible outcomes;
- Review and refresh existing neighbourhood planning toolkits and develop new ones where appropriate;
- Administer the Neighbourhood Planning Champions Network, recruit and retain Champions;
- Respond to factual neighbourhood planning-related correspondence forwarded on from the Authority.

4.1.2 **Grants:** Available to eligible neighbourhood planning groups, and will require the successful supplier to:

- Devise a robust process for assessing grant applications and ensure applicants meet eligibility requirements;
- Design and provide grant application forms and guidance for publication on the relevant website;
- Complete grant application assessments and provide all necessary details to the 3rd party Grant Administrator;
- For the first two months only, be able to receive and process grant applications which have been submitted via the incumbent provider's web-site. The incumbent provider shall periodically transfer relevant application information to the successful supplier, who shall be responsible for processing these applications so that the first approved payments can be issued from 1st April 2018. Further detail on the anticipated mobilisation and transition milestones for the programme are included at Annex A.

4.1.3 **Technical support:** Available to eligible neighbourhood planning groups, and will require the successful supplier to:

- Devise a robust application process to ensure that support packages are awarded according to need and Authority priorities;
- Deliver technical support packages of varying complexity and within defined timescales, such packages to include as a minimum:
 - Setting up a neighbourhood forum
 - Strategic Environmental Assessments
 - Design, including Design Codes
 - Site assessment/sustainability
 - Housing needs assessment and studies
 - Plan health check, prior to examination
 - Preparing for examinations
 - Facilitation days from a suitably qualified individual.

- 4.2 The expectation is that technical support outputs (with the exception of forum set-up, facilitation and examination-related packages) will be suitable for incorporation directly into neighbourhood plans as policies or as content directly related to plan policies.
- 4.3 The successful supplier will also need to ensure that relevant information is gathered on each neighbourhood planning group applying for grant or technical support and uploaded onto an appropriate management information system. Information will need to be captured in a suitably accessible, transferrable and transparent manner and be capable of satisfying all Authority management information requirements, including those linked to contractual KPIs / SLAs and any potential payment by results requirements.

WEBSITE AND ADVICE SERVICES

- 4.4 The Authority also requires the provision of a new website and advice service to under-pin and support delivery of the programme specific requirements described above. This will need to complement the Authority's evolving online neighbourhood planning content published on GOV.UK, thereby ensuring a seamless and consistent service for customers whilst avoiding unnecessary duplication.
- 4.5 It is envisaged that the new website and advice line service will include:
- provision of basic information for those wanting to find information about neighbourhood planning, what support is available, for whom, and how to apply;
 - publication of relevant case studies and toolkits;
 - provision of advice via the most cost-effective channels, e.g. live chat and / or online forums, and triage / referral to expert advisers and other sources of information where appropriate;
 - support of the 'Champions Network' through promotion, recruitment and referral of Champions;
 - promotion of neighbourhood planning events organised by Champions or by the successful supplier.

SIZE & SCOPE

- 4.6 The Authority intends to award a contract for an initial term of 4 years (i.e. 2018 – 2022) with the option to extend for up to a further 12 months (i.e. 4+1 year term).
- 4.7 Based on analysis, the Authority expects around 3,000 grant applications to be made over the 4 year period from 2018-2022, and around 600 technical support packages to be delivered. Because of the demand-led nature of the programme, there is a high level of volatility in these forecasts. However, the Authority knows via recent expressions of interest and online monitoring that there is a strong pipeline of existing and emerging groups that are highly likely to access the future support programme.
- 4.8 The estimated total value of the programme for the period 2018-2022 - including implementation, on-going management costs for all services, provision of technical support packages and grant funding provided directly to communities - is around £23m (incl. VAT).

POTENTIAL SUPPLIERS

- 4.9 The Authority anticipates that the successful supplier of these services will:
- be able to mobilise at pace;
 - be prepared to work effectively and pro-actively with the Authority, the Neighbourhood Planning Grant Administrator and the incumbent provider where necessary to ensure

smooth transition to the new programme and to maintain co-ordinated delivery of the end-to-end services;

- have the knowledge, skills and capacity to advise neighbourhood planning groups on how to deliver their vision and development ambitions for their areas;
- be able to devise and deliver grant and technical support packages for neighbourhood development plans and orders;
- have access to specialists with a thorough understanding of the planning system and development process, who can advise on technical matters such as Strategic Environmental Assessment and design matters including Design Codes;
- be able to deliver support effectively to non-specialist community groups;
- target funding to deliver the Authority's priorities for housing and design;
- be able to provide a secure and robust IT and financial management system that can seamlessly interface with other relevant data systems where necessary;
- be able to provide succinct and reliable management information, which supports a proactive approach to performance management and financial forecasting;
- be able to design and create an on-line presence which effectively promotes the service, supports the end-to-end processes and is simple and easy to navigate;
- demonstrate appropriate internal governance and risk management arrangements, including business continuity planning;
- have the levels of financial resilience required to maintain delivery of a highly volatile, demand led service, and be capable of demonstrating this to the Authority's satisfaction on a regular basis;
- have a wide geographical reach across England.

4.10 The Authority also envisages that the successful supplier will be able to satisfy minimum, mandatory criteria in relation to:

4.10.1 **Technical and Professional Ability** – Potential suppliers will be asked to provide examples of recent contracts (or explanation of why such contract examples are unavailable, e.g. if the potential supplier is a new start-up) which evidence their experience and expertise relevant to the requirements for the Neighbourhood Planning Support Services. Potential suppliers will also need to demonstrate that they have access to appropriately skilled and scalable resources that will enable successful delivery of the contract.

4.10.2 **Economic and Financial Standing** – Potential suppliers will be asked to provide evidence of satisfactory financial standing relative to the scale/value of the proposed contract (or an explanation of why such evidence is unavailable, e.g. if the potential supplier is a new start-up), including evidence that their turnover would not be overly reliant on revenue generated through this contract. Potential suppliers will also be required to maintain and submit evidence on a regular basis which demonstrates their continued economic and financial standing throughout the duration of the contract term.

4.10.3 **Insurance** – Potential suppliers will be required to provide evidence of:

- employer's liability insurance of at least £5 million; and
- professional liability insurance of at least £2 million.

4.10.4 **Cyber Essentials** – Potential suppliers will need to demonstrate that they meet the basic requirements of the Cyber Essentials Scheme (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cyber-essentials-scheme-overview>). The easiest way to demonstrate that the Cyber Essentials requirements are met is to gain the relevant certificate.

4.10.5 **Absence of Grounds for Mandatory Rejection** - The Authority is required by law to exclude tenderers from participating in a procurement if any of the circumstances in Public Contract Regulations (2015) R57(1), (2) and (3) apply.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/551130/List_of_Mandatory_and_Discretionary_Exclusions.pdf

4.11 Please note the criteria stated above are indicative only and the Authority reserves the right to vary them for the purposes of the procurement.

CONTRACTING ARRANGEMENTS

4.12 This procurement will be open to all potential suppliers. Potential suppliers may choose to participate in this procurement as a group or group of economic operators (e.g. consortium) or may intend on using sub-contractors. The Authority has published a 'Pen Pic Template' and corresponding 'Potential Supplier Networking Database' to help facilitate such arrangements, and potential suppliers are invited to complete and return the Pen Pic Template at their own discretion. Please note the Authority may require a group of economic operators to assume a specific legal form for the purpose of concluding the contract.

4.13 Where a proposal involves a group and / or sub-contractors potential suppliers must provide clarity on the proposed organisational structure. This may include the identities of all parties involved, information about their relevant capability and experience, and how and when the parties would be relied upon to meet the contractual obligations.

4.14 A potential supplier may be connected with the submission of multiple tenders for the Neighbourhood Planning Support Services contract and/or the Neighbourhood Planning Grant Administration Services contract. This may include (without limit) where it submits a tender in its own name, as a sub-contractor and/or a member of a group of economic operators connected with a separate tender. In such cases the Authority may make further enquiries regarding each tender to satisfy itself that such involvement does not cause potential or actual conflicts of interest, capacity problems, restrictions or distortions in competition. Where issues are identified, the Authority may require the potential supplier to take appropriate action as it deems necessary. .

5 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING GRANT ADMINISTRATION SERVICES

KEY DELIVERABLES

5.1 This contract will require the provision of the following key services:

- 5.1.1 Administer and monitor grants for the Neighbourhood Planning programme, as directed by the Neighbourhood Planning Support Services supplier. For the avoidance of doubt it shall be out of scope for the Grant Administrator to manage the grant application process or evaluate grants.
- 5.1.2 Conduct financial due diligence checks on applicants and provide assurance that grant applicants are financially robust and have effective governance and management arrangements in place.
- 5.1.3 Issue and manage grant funding agreements, monitoring templates and requests for supporting information to applicants as necessary.

- 5.1.4 Make, and where needed receive, grant payments to applicants through a BACS mechanism.
- 5.1.5 Ensure all applicants spend grant money appropriately in accordance with the terms of the grant offer and, as a minimum, that applicants complete and submit an end of grant report, and where required a staged payment report and/or a Statement of Grant Usage.
- 5.1.6 Identify and recover any grant underspend on an annual basis.
- 5.1.7 Record, monitor and report details on all applicants, financial transactions, grant spending and communication between the Grant Administrator, Neighbourhood Planning Support Services supplier and grant applicants.
- 5.1.8 Maintain close working with the Neighbourhood Planning Support Services supplier to ensure a seamless process for applicants, and to ensure that a robust, accessible and transparent audit trail is maintained.

SIZE & SCOPE

- 5.2 The Authority intends to award a contract for an initial term of 4 years (i.e. 2018 – 2022) with the option to extend for up to a further 12 months (i.e. 4+1 year term). This contract term is designed to align with the term of the Support Services contract.
- 5.3 Based on analysis, the Authority expects around 3,000 grant applications to be made over the 4 year period from 2018-2022, for up to £9m in grant funding. Because of the demand-led nature of the programme, there is a high level of volatility in these forecasts, and the Authority expects programme funding to be flexibly allocated between the provision of technical support and grants over the course of the contract. However, the Authority knows via recent expressions of interest and informal online monitoring that there is a strong pipeline of existing and emerging groups that are highly likely to access the future support programme.
- 5.4 The Authority anticipates that the value of Grant Administration fees due over the contract period will be subject to the number of grant applications received and approved.

POTENTIAL SUPPLIERS

- 5.5 The Authority anticipates that the successful supplier of these services will:
 - be able to mobilise at pace;
 - be prepared to work effectively and pro-actively with the Authority, the successful Neighbourhood Planning Support Services supplier and the incumbent provider(s) where necessary to ensure smooth transition to the new programme and to maintain co-ordinated delivery of the end-to-end services;
 - have sufficient resource to respond to the flexible nature of the grant programme and the uncertainty over the volume of grants to be administered;
 - be able to complete due diligence and financial checks on grant applicants;
 - be capable of paying, monitoring and reporting on grant funds in a timely and accurate manner;
 - demonstrate appropriate internal governance and risk management arrangements, including business continuity planning;
 - be able to provide a secure and robust IT system that can seamlessly interface with other relevant data systems where necessary.

CONTRACTING ARRANGEMENTS

- 5.6 This procurement will be open to those organisations listed under Lot 1 of the CCS Grants and Programmes Services Framework (http://ccs-agreements.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/suppliers?sm_field_contract_id=%22RM949%3A1%22), however these organisations may propose to use or engage sub-contractors to deliver the services, in accordance with the terms of the Framework.
- 5.7 A potential supplier may be connected with the submission of multiple tenders for the Neighbourhood Planning Support Services contract and/or the Neighbourhood Planning Grant Administration Services contract. This may include (without limit) where it submits a tender in its own name, as a sub-contractor and/or a member of a group of economic operators connected with a separate tender. In such cases, the Authority may make further enquiries regarding each tender to satisfy itself that such involvement does not cause potential or actual conflicts of interest, capacity problems, restrictions or distortions in competition. Where issues are identified, the Authority may require the potential supplier to take appropriate action as it deems necessary.

6 KEY DATES & PROCUREMENT PROCESS

- 6.1 Please note that all timescales below are indicative and are provided for information purposes only. The Authority reserves the right to amend the dates at any time and potential suppliers rely on them entirely at their own risk.
- 6.2 The Authority anticipates a phased mobilisation and transition approach following award of contracts, and that there will be limited overlaps with the existing support service arrangements. Further detail on the anticipated mobilisation and transition milestones for the programme are included at Annex A.
- 6.3 Indicative dates for the procurement processes are as follows:

PROCUREMENT STAGE	INDICATIVE TIMESCALE	
	Support Services Contract	Grant Administration Contract
Invitation to Tender (ITT) issued	Early September 2017	Early October 2017
Deadline for receipt of tender proposals	Mid October 2017	Late October 2017
Contract award / mobilisation commencement	Late December 2017 / Early January 2018	Late December 2017 / Early January 2018
Grant application and assessment services commence	1st February 2018	
Website and advice services Commence	Mid March 2018	N/A
Grant payment services commence	1st April 2018	
Technical Support application and assessment services commence	1st April 2018	N/A
Technical Support delivery commences	1st May 2018	N/A

- 6.4 The procurement process itself will be conducted via the Authority's e-tendering portal <https://dclg.bravosolution.co.uk/web/login.html> and Potential Supplier's are encouraged to register on the portal as soon as possible in readiness for launch of the procurement.

7 FEEDBACK

- 7.1 The Authority welcomes comments from potential suppliers on any part of the PTME information shared to date. Please note the Authority will not be able to respond to any individual queries or questions received, but may publish further information or updates where considered appropriate.
- 7.2 Potential suppliers are also free to complete and return the previously published 'Pen Pic' template, and the Authority shall update the Potential Supplier Networking Database accordingly.
- 7.3 Please send any comments and / or completed Pen Pic templates to tim.lundy@communities.gsi.gov.uk. no later than 17.00, Tuesday 8th August 2017.

8 GENERAL CONDITIONS

- 8.1 This PTME is intended to aid potential supplier's understanding of the requirements and the potential procurement approach in advance of any formal competitive tender exercise. This PTME will also help the Authority to refine the requirements and to understand the potential level of interest in the delivering requirements.
- 8.2 The Authority reserves the right to change any information contained within this PTME at any time, and potential suppliers rely upon it entirely at their own risk.
- 8.3 The Authority reserves the right not to proceed with any competitive tender exercise after this PTME or to award any contract.
- 8.4 Any and all costs associated with the production of a response to this PTME must be borne by the potential supplier.
- 8.5 No down-selection of potential suppliers will take place as a consequence of any responses or interactions relating to this PTME.
- 8.6 The Authority expects that all responses to this PTME will be provided by potential suppliers in good faith to the best of their ability in the light of information available at the time of their response.
- 8.7 No information provided by a potential supplier in response to this PTME will be carried forward, used or acknowledged in any way for the purpose of evaluating the potential supplier, in any subsequent formal procurement process.

