Request for Quotation

### Understanding the effectiveness of environmental DNA (eDNA) techniques for detection of marine mammals: Lab analysis and reporting contract

19 August 2024

Request for Quotation

### Understanding the effectiveness of environmental DNA (eDNA) techniques for detection of marine mammals

You are invited to submit a quotation for the requirement described in the specification, Section 2.

Please confirm by email, receipt of these documents and whether you intend to submit a quote or not.

Your response should be returned to the following email address by:

Email: Samantha.parker@naturalengland.org.uk

Date: 03/09/2024

Time: 18:00

Ensure you include the name of the quotation and ‘Final Submission’ in the subject field to make it clear that it is your response.

Contact Details and Timetable

Nicholas Dunn (Nicholas.Dunn@naturalengland.org.uk) and Sam Parker ([Samantha.Parker@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:Samantha.Parker@naturalengland.org.uk))will be your contacts for any questions linked to the content of the quote or the process. Please submit any clarification questions via email and note that, unless commercially sensitive, both the question and the response will be circulated to all tenderers.

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| --- | --- |
| Action | Date |
| Date of issue of RFQ | 19/08/2024 at12:00 BST |
| Deadline for clarifications questions | 30/08/2024 at 12:00 BST |
| Deadline for receipt of Quotation | 03/09/2024at 12:00BST |
| Intended date of Contract Award | 20/09/2024 |
| Intended Contract Start Date | 20/09/2024 |
| Intended Contract End Date | 28/02/2025 |

Section 1: General Information

Glossary

Unless the context otherwise requires, the following words and expressions used within this Request for Quotation shall have the following meanings (to be interpreted in the singular or plural as the context requires):

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|  |  |
| “Authority” | means Natural England who is the Contracting Authority. |
| “Contract” | means the contract to be entered into by the Authority and the successful supplier. |
| “Response” | means the information submitted by a supplier in response to the RFQ. |
| “RFQ” | means this Request for Quotation and all related documents published by the Authority and made available to suppliers. |

Conditions applying to the RFQ

You should examine your Response and related documents ensuring it is complete and in accordance with the stated instructions prior to submission.

Your Response must contain sufficient information to enable the Authority to evaluate it fairly and effectively. You should ensure that you have prepared your Response fully and accurately and that prices quoted are arithmetically correct for the units stated.

By submitting a Response, you, the supplier, are deemed to accept the terms and conditions provided in the RFQ. Confirmation of this is required in Annex 2.

Failure to comply with the instructions set out in the RFQ may result in the supplier’s exclusion from this quotation process.

Acceptance of Quotations

By issuing this RFQ the Authority does not bind itself to accept any quotation and reserves the right not to award a contract to any supplier who submits a quotation.

Costs

The Authority will not reimburse you for any costs and expenses which you incur preparing and submitting your quotation, even if the Authority amends or terminates the procurement process.

Self-Declaration and Mandatory Requirements

The RFQ includes a self-declaration response (Annex 1) which covers basic information about the supplier, as well as any grounds for exclusion. If you do not comply with them, your quotation will not be evaluated.

Any mandatory requirements will be set out in Section 2, Specification of Requirements and, if you do not comply with them, your quotation will not be evaluated.

Clarifications

Any request for clarification regarding the RFQ and supporting documentation must be submitted via email no later than the deadline for clarifications set out in the Timetable. The Authority shall be under no obligation to respond to queries raised after the clarification deadline.

The Authority will respond to all reasonable clarifications as soon as possible but cannot guarantee a minimum response time. The Authority will publish all clarifications and its responses to all suppliers via email unless deemed commercially sensitive.

If a supplier believes that a request for clarification is commercially sensitive, it should clearly state this when submitting the clarification request. However, if the Authority considers either that:

* the clarification and response are not commercially sensitive; and
* all suppliers may benefit from its disclosure,

then the Authority will notify the supplier (via email), and the supplier will have an opportunity to withdraw the request for clarification by sending a further message requesting the withdrawal of the clarification request. If not withdrawn by the supplier within 2 working days of the Authority’s notification, the Authority may publish the clarification request and its response to all suppliers and the Authority shall not be liable to the supplier for any consequences of such publication.

The Authority reserves the right to seek clarification of any aspect of a quotation and/or provide additional information during the evaluation phase to carry out a fair evaluation. Where the Authority seeks clarification on any aspect of the quotation, the supplier must respond within the timeframe requested by the Authority.

Amendments

The Authority may amend the RFQ at any time prior to the deadline for receipt. If it amends the RFQ the Authority will notify you via email.

Suppliers may modify their quotation prior to the deadline for Responses. No Responses may be modified after the deadline for Responses.

Suppliers may withdraw their quotations at any time by submitting a notice via the email to the named contact.

Conditions of Contract

The Authority’s Standard Good and Services Terms & Conditions (used for purchases under £50k) can be located on the [Natural England Website](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england/about/procurement) and will be applicable to any contract awarded as a result of this quotation process. The Authority will not accept any changes to these terms and conditions proposed by a supplier.

Suppliers should note that the quotation provided by the successful bidder will form part of the Contract.

Prices

Prices must be submitted in £ sterling, exclusive of VAT.

Disclosure

All Central Government Departments, 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, the Authority may disclose within Government any details contained in your quotation. The information will not be disclosed outside Government during the procurement.

In addition, the Authority is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, which provide a public right of access to information held by public bodies. In accordance with these two statutes, the Authority may be required to disclose information contained in your quotation to any person who submits a request for information pursuant to those statutes.

Further to the Government’s transparency agenda, all UK Government organisations must advertise on Contract Finder in accordance with the following publication thresholds:

* Central Contracting Authority’s: £12,000
* Sub Central Contracting Authority’s and NHS Trusts: £30,000

For the purpose of this RFQ the Authority is classified as a Central Contracting Authority with a publication threshold of £12,000 inclusive of VAT.

If this opportunity is advertised via Contracts Finder, we are obliged to publish details of the awarded contract including who has won the contract, the contract value, and indicate whether the winning supplier is a small and medium-sized enterprise (“SMEs”) or voluntary organisation or charity. A copy of the contract must also be published with confidential information redacted.

By submitting a Response, you consent to these terms as part of the procurement.

Disclaimers

Whilst the information in this RFQ and any supporting information referred to herein or provided to you by the Authority have been prepared in good faith the Authority does not warrant that this information is comprehensive or that it has been independently verified.

The Authority does not:

* make any representation or warranty (express or implied) as to the accuracy, reasonableness or completeness of the RFQ;
* accept any liability for the information contained in the RFQ or for the fairness, accuracy or completeness of that information; or
* accept any liability for any loss or damage (other than in respect of fraudulent misrepresentation or any other liability which cannot lawfully be excluded) arising as a result of reliance on such information or any subsequent communication.

Any supplier considering entering into contractual relationships with the Authority following receipt of the RFQ should make its own investigations and independent assessment of the Authority and its requirements for the goods and/or services and should seek its own professional financial and legal advice.

Protection of Personal Data

In order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 the supplier must agree to the following:

You must only process any personal data in strict accordance with instructions from the Authority.

* You must ensure that all the personal data that we disclose to you or you collect on our behalf under this agreement are kept confidential.
* You must take reasonable steps to ensure the reliability of employees who have access to personal data.
* Only employees who may be required to assist in meeting the obligations under this agreement may have access to the personal data.
* Any disclosure of personal data must be made in confidence and extend only so far as that which is specifically necessary for the purposes of this agreement.
* You must ensure that there are appropriate security measures in place to safeguard against any unauthorised access or unlawful processing or accidental loss, destruction or damage or disclosure of the personal data.
* On termination of this agreement, for whatever reason, the personal data must be returned to us promptly and safely, together with all copies in your possession or control.

General Data Protection Regulations 2018

For the purposes of the Regulations the Authority is the data processor.

The personal information that we have asked you provide on individuals (data subjects) that will be working for you on this contract will be used in compiling the tender list and in assessing your offer. If you are unsuccessful the information will be held and destroyed within two years of the award of contracts. If you are awarded a contract it will be retained for the duration of the contract and destroyed within seven years of the contract’s expiry.

We may monitor the performance of the individuals during the execution of the contract, and the results of our monitoring, together with the information that you have provided, will be used in determining what work is allocated under the contract, and in any renewal of the contract or in the award of future contracts of a similar nature. The information will not be disclosed to anyone outside the Authority without the consent of the data subject, unless the Authority is required by law to make such disclosures.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

The Client is striving to create a diverse and inclusive working environment where every individual has equality of opportunity to progress and to apply their unique insights to making the UK a great place for living. The Service Provider is expected to respect this commitment in all dealings with Natural England staff and service users.

Suppliers are expected to;

* support Defra group to achieve its Public Sector Equality Duty as defined by the Equality Act 2010, and to support delivery of [Defra group’s Equality & Diversity Strategy](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defra-group-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-2020-to-2024/defra-group-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-2020-to-2024).
* meet the standards set out in the [Government’s Supplier Code of Conduct](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supplier-code-of-conduct)
* work with Defra group to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion impacts are addressed (positive and negative) in the goods, services and works we procure, barriers are removed and opportunities realised.

Sustainable Procurement

Addressing global sustainability impacts and realising additional community benefits within commercial activity is core to Defra group’s approach, working with its supply chain is key to achieving sustainable outcomes. In addition to supporting Defra group to meet its outcomes we look to understand and reduce negative sustainability impacts associated with our commercial activity and realise benefits.

The Client encourages its suppliers to share these values, work to address negative impacts and realise opportunities, measure performance and success.

Suppliers are expected to have an understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals, the interconnections between them and the relevance to the Goods, Services and works procured on the Client’s behalf.

Conflicts of Interest

The concept of a conflict of interest includes but is not limited to any situation where an Involved Person or Relevant Body has directly or indirectly, a financial, economic or other personal interest which might be perceived to compromise their impartiality and independence in the context of the procurement procedure and/or affect the integrity of the contract award.

We expect suppliers to mitigate appropriately against any real or perceived conflict of interest through their work with government. A supplier with a position of influence gained through a contract should not use that position to unfairly disadvantage any other supplier or reduce the potential for future competition

Where the supplier is aware of any circumstances giving rise to a conflict of interest or has any indication that a conflict of interest exists or may arise you should inform the Authority of this as soon as possible (whether before or after they have submitted a quotation). Tenderers should remain alert to the possibility of conflicts of interest arising at all stages of the procurement and should update the Authority if any new circumstances or information arises, or there are any changes to information already provided to the Authority. Failure to do so, and/or to properly manage any conflicts of interest may result in a quotation being rejected.

Provided that it has been carried out in an open, fair and transparent manner, routine pre-market engagement carried out by the Authority should not represent a conflict of interest for the supplier.

Section 2: The Invitation

Specification of Requirements

Background to Natural England

Natural England (NE) is the government’s advisor on the natural environment. We provide practical advice, grounded in science, on how best to safeguard England’s natural wealth for the benefit of everyone. Our remit is to ensure sustainable stewardship of the land and sea so that people and nature can thrive. It is our responsibility to see that England’s rich natural environment can adapt and survive intact for future generations to enjoy.

Background to the specific work area relevant to this purchase

The marine Natural Capital and Ecosystems Approach (mNCEA) mission is to “Transform and innovate the way our evidence-base is captured, analysed and brought together to ensure science meets the needs of policy / decision makers to embed a natural capital approach, allowing us to leave our marine environment in a better state than we found it, achieving clean, productive, healthy and biologically diverse seas, and a sustainable blue economy.”

The mNCEA will provide a holistic, accurate and robust set of evidence and data for DEFRA to make informed policy decisions about the state of our natural capital assets in high profile policy areas (e.g. future fisheries, offshore wind etc), and lead to better outcomes for the environment. It will also identify innovative and transformative ways of collecting, analysing and distributing the data.

This project will review methods for the use of innovative environmental DNA (eDNA) techniques for marine mammals as part of the NE mNCEA programme.

Monitoring of marine mammals using conventional visual or acoustic methods from vessels and aircraft is associated with high costs. However, the rapidly developing field of eDNA is a cost-effective and non-invasive method for monitoring marine species, and their application to monitoring marine mammals is an emerging field of research.

The objectives from this project are;

* To understand the efficiency of passive sampling techniques.
* To understand the effectiveness of open-source primer sets for the detection of marine mammals.

NE seeks a lab partner for the analysis of marine eDNA samples for the understanding of this technique for marine mammal surveying. Samples will be collected in late summer 2024 and provided to the lab for metabarcoding analysis, with expected reporting delivery in February 2025.

Requirement

NE requires the delivery of lab analysis and reporting of eDNA samples. The samples will be collected by a separate contractor following NE specified sampling methodologies. The samples will be collected in the UK marine environment in September-October 2024.

Samples

The samples provided will be;

1. filtered and preserved water samples (45 x 0.45µm sterivex filters for analysis, plus 4 x 0.45µm sterivex filters as field negative controls)
2. preserved gauze samples (15 x gauze samples to be divided into 3 each, total 45 for analysis, plus 1 x gauze sample to be divided into 3 as field negative controls)

“Active” sampling: Water samples will be obtained by 5ltr niskin bottle samples taken in triplicate at each sampling station (N=15). Water samples will be stored at room temperature (or below) out of direct sunlight, in foil lined bags (to reduce degradation) until filtration, and filtered as soon as possible (maximum 12 hours) n 36 hours. The water samples will be filtered into 0.45µm sterivex filters (minimum 2ltrs filtrate), and preserved using 1.2-1.5 ml DNA/RNA Later. Preserved filters will be stored at room temperature out of direct sunlight.

“Passive sampling”: Gauze samples will be obtained by the towing of a metaprobe (Maiello *et al.* 2022). The start point of each tow will be the sampling station for each water sample (above). Gauze rolls will be preserved in approx. 150ml 99% ethanol and stored at room temperature out of direct sunlight.

Transportation of all samples will be within a cool box with ice packs. Full sampling protocols can be provided to the successful contractor upon award.

Tenderers are required to provide a full method statement for all lab analysis.

Extraction

In your response, please outline the methods you intend to use to extract and analyse the DNA. Protocols used must be open source. Gauze extraction protocols are required to follow those outlined within Maiello *et al.* 2022.

Please include details on the measures taken to avoid sample contamination in the lab.

Use of a positive control (Venison, *Cervidae sp*.) is required, to be supplied by the successful lab contractor, to evaluate the performance of the primer sets with DNA samples from known species.

PCR & Primers

The following primers are required for metabarcoding analysis for marine mammals;

1. MarVer1: Valsecchi, *et al.* (2020).
2. MarVer3: Valsecchi, *et al.* (2020).
3. MiMammal: Ushio *et al.* (2017).
4. MiFish: Miya *et al.* (2015).

Sequencing, data analysis and reference libraries

Only publicly available reference libraries to be used.

If a sequence is unable to be matched to a species, then it should be assigned it to the lowest possible taxonomic rank (for example, genus or family).

Outputs: Reporting

Two final reports are required as outputs from this project.

* A sampling comparison report, reviewing the data from both “active” and “passive” sampling techniques.
* A survey report, detailing the animals detected and discussing the efficiency of each metabarcoding primer for their detection.

Each final report must contain the following sections (further details below);

* Executive summary
* Introduction
* Methods
* Results
* Discussion

The methods section of the final report should include detailed methodology. Suggested sections are in the table below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sampling | State how samples were collected, number of samples and locations of sampling. State how sites were selected (NE to provide), and the dates and times of sample collection. State the volume of material sampled, and storage and processing of samples prior to DNA extraction. |
| DNA extraction methods | State any kits if used. State how the DNA was quantified and discuss the quality of DNA extracted. Discuss how sample contamination was controlled for and avoided. |
| PCR amplification | Specify the primers, PCR cycle conditions, reagents, volumes, and number of replicates per sample used. Contractors may only reference another publication without providing these details if the protocol is followed as written, including the same primers, PCR cycle conditions, reagents, volumes, and number of replicates per sample. Describe the indexing process. Describe the positive and negative controls used, and whether these behaved as expected. |
| Sequencing | State how the DNA products were prepared for sequencing including reagents, primers and conditions. State how the DNA was quantified, and the model of the sequencing machine used. The methods should allow the reader to understand confidence in the sequences obtained. |
| Bioinformatic processing | State in detail how the bioinformatic processing was completed, by specifying the steps taken, must be from open access pipelines. State any programs and models that were used and any thresholds set. Where sequences are being used for taxonomic assignment, explain the methods used to assign a species and why any reads may have been discarded. State all cut-off thresholds and state whether OTUs or ASVs are used. |
| Reference Libraries | Name all reference libraries used, and any rules used. State all cut-off thresholds, such as for % identity for taxonomic assignment. |
| QA | Explain the QA checks that have been undertaken on the results, including thresholds that may have been set. |

The contractor should provide a detailed results section, explaining the results generated, which should include:

* The efficiency of DNA extraction and correct amplification of expected PCR products at each stage.
* Number of sequencing reads generated, quality of sequencing reads, (which should be assessed using [FastQC](https://www.bioinformatics.babraham.ac.uk/projects/fastqc/) or similar software e.g. MultiQC), proportion of reads discarded and proportion which were assigned to species.
* Full list of species identified.
* Visualizations of marine mammal species detections by primer set.
* Statistical analysis of the data to determine the most efficient survey methodology (Sampling comparison report only).
* Statistical analysis of the data to determine the most efficient metabarcoding primer (Survey report only).

The contractor should include a detailed discussion explaining the results and confidence levels in the bioinformatic processing.  Discussion should include:

* A discussion of any problems and how they were resolved, such as issues with PCR leading to a change of reagents or amplification conditions.
* Quality of the sequencing reads obtained
* Discussion of the pros and cons of the primers and barcode(s) used. Has the expected species diversity been detected? Have non-target taxa been detected? Is species bias expected? Can the assay distinguish between closely related species?
* Discussion of any unexpected species detections.  If any non-native or unexpected species have been detected, the confidence in this result.
* Discussion of any reference database or barcode issues which may have led to sequences being wrongly assigned or not assigned to species level.
* Discussion of whether the data can give information on species abundance or not.
* Discussion of the effectiveness of passive sampling techniques.
* Recommendations for further study, based on the results of the current study.

Reports to be provided as electronic copies in MS Word.

NE will publish this report in accordance with our Technical Publication Guidance. Please refer to available guidance for writing Natural England Technical publications (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5790636781600768>)

There may be an opportunity to publish findings through a manuscript for a relevant scientific journal. If this is of interest to the awarded party the production of which will be possible through the Open Government Licence <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/> and in partnership with Natural England.

Outputs: Data

The follow data sets are required as outputs of a metabarcoding project:

* A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet listing the species identified, the sample location if applicable and the reference library and sequence ID used to identify the species. If a species was not assigned, the sequence should be identified to the lowest possible taxonomic level, e.g. genus or family.
* All raw sequence data generated in the FASTQ format. The sequences obtained should be post sequence cleaning, but prior to more detailed bioinformatic processing. Two FASTQ files (with the extensions R1.fastq and R2.fastq) per sample should be provided, i.e. demultiplexed data.
* Associated metadata (template sheet provided by NE)

Data ownership: Natural England will own all data generated in the project.

Outputs: Physical samples

Samples provided should be stored appropriately for 18 months to allow the opportunity for re-analysis.  Extracted DNA should be stored in solution at –80°C, or dried and stored at room temperature.

References

Maiello, G., Talarico, L., Carpentieri, P., De Angelis, F., Franceschini, S., Harper, L.R., Neave, E.F., Rickards, O., Sbrana, A., Shum, P., Veltre, V., Mariani, S., Russo, T. (2022) Little samplers, big fleet: eDNA metabarcoding from commercial trawlers enhances ocean monitoring. Fisheries Research, Vol 249, ISSN 0165-7836, doi: j.fishres.2022.106259.

Miya, M., Sato, Y., Fukunaga, T., Sado, T., Poulsen, J. Y., Sato, K., Minamoto, T., Yamamoto, S., Yamanaka, H., Araki, H., Kondoh, M., & Iwasaki, W. (2015). MiFish, a set of universal PCR primers for metabarcoding environmental DNA from fishes: detection of more than 230 subtropical marine species. Royal Society Open Science, 2(7). doi: 10.1098/RSOS.150088

Ushio M, Fukuda H, Inoue T, Makoto K, Kishida O, Sato K, Murata K, Nikaido M, Sado T, Sato Y, Takeshita M, Iwasaki W, Yamanaka H, Kondoh M, & Miya M. (2017) Environmental DNA enables detection of terrestrial mammals from forest pond water. Mol Ecol Resour. 17(6). doi: 10.1111/1755-0998.12690

Valsecchi, E., Bylemans, J., Goodman, S. J., Lombardi, R., Carr, I., Castellano, L., Galimberti, A., & Galli, P. (2020). Novel universal primers for metabarcoding environmental DNA surveys of marine mammals and other marine vertebrates. Environmental DNA. doi: 10.1002/edn3.72

Sustainability

Natural England protects and improves the environment and is committed to reducing the sustainability impacts of its activities directly and through its supply chains. We expect the Contractor to share this commitment and adopt a sound, proactive sustainable approach in keeping with the 25 year environmental plan/our commitments compliant with all applicable legislation. This includes understanding and reducing direct and indirect sustainability impacts and realising opportunities, including but not restricted to; resilience to climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, water use and quality, biosecurity, resource efficiency and waste, reducing the risk of pollution, biodiversity, modern slavery and equality, diversity & inclusion, negative community impacts.

As a delivery partner, the successful contractor is expected to pursue sustainability in their operations, thereby ensuring the Contracting Authority is not contracting with a supplier whose operational outputs run contrary to the Contracting Authority’s objectives. The successful contractor will need to approach the project with a focus on the entire life cycle of the project.

Outputs and Contract Management

The following table has been provided to outline to expected project timelines for milestones and deliverables.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Reference | Deliverable | Responsible Party | Date of completion |
| A. Milestone 1 | Start-Up meeting | All | Within 2 weeks of contract signing |
| B. Milestone 2 | Sample provision | Natural England | By end of October 2024 |
| C. Deliverable 1 | Deliverables sent (draft reports with FASTQ and Excel files) | Contractor | 07/02/25 |
| D. | Draft report review | Natural England | 10-14/02/25 |
| E. | Comments sent to Contractor | Natural England | 14/02/24 |
| F. | Contractor report updated | Contractor | 17-21/02/25 |
| G. Deliverable 2 | Final report sent | Contractor | 21/02/25 |
| H. | Final report review | Natural England | 24-27/02/25 |
| I. Milestone 3 | Final report signed off | Natural England | 28/02/25 |
| J. Milestone 4 | Contract completion date | All | 28/02/25 |

Fortnightly progress calls are expected for the duration of the contract.

Payment

The Authority will raise purchase orders to cover the cost of the services and will issue to the awarded supplier following contract award.

The Authority’s preference is for all invoices to be sent electronically, quoting a valid Purchase Order number.

An invoice may be submitted after completion of all project works, and payment will be made in full on project completion.

It is anticipated that this contract will be awarded for a period of 4.5 months to end no later than 01/02/2025. Prices will remain fixed for the duration of the contract award period. We may at our sole discretion extend this contract to include related or further work. Any extension shall be agreed in writing in advance of any work commencing and may be subject to further competition.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation of this project will be completed in 2 elements; technical (quality) and commercial (price).

We will award this contract in line with the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT) as set out in the following award criteria:

Technical – 50%

Commercial – 50%

Technical aspects will be measured based on the following criteria;

* Methodology
* Quality Assurance measures
* Project management structure and processes
* Project experience

Evaluation criteria

Evaluation weightings are 50% technical and 50% commercial, the winning tenderer will be the highest scoring combined score.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Award Criteria | Weighting (%) | Evaluation Topic & Weighting | Sub-Criteria | Weighted Question |
| Technical | 50% | Service Proposal | Methodology | Q1 Provide details of the methodology and approaches proposed to deliver the requirements of this project.  (30% of technical score available) |
| Quality Assurance measures | Q2 How will you ensure quality of service throughout all stages of the project?  (5% of technical score available) |
| Project management structure and processes | Q3 Please provide details of the core team and processes that will be assigned to the project.  (5% of technical score available) |
| Project experience | Q4 Provide details of recent experience carrying out similar contracts  (10% of technical score available) |
| Commercial | 50% | Whole life cost of the proposed Contract | Commercial Model | Q5 Provide a single fixed price for delivering the entire project, clearly outline VAT.  (100% of commercial score available) |

Technical (50%)

Technical evaluations will be based on responses to specific questions covering key criteria which are outlined below. Scores for questions will be based on the following:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Description | Score | Definition |
| Very good | 100 | Addresses all the Authority’s requirements with all the relevant supporting information set out in the RFQ. There are no weaknesses and therefore the tender response gives the Authority complete confidence that all the requirements will be met to a high standard. |
| Good | 70 | Addresses all the Authority’s requirements with all the relevant supporting information set out in the RFQ. The response contains minor weaknesses and therefore the tender response gives the Authority confidence that all the requirements will be met to a good standard. |
| Moderate | 50 | Addresses most of the requirements with most of the relevant supporting information set out in the RFQ. The response contains moderate weaknesses and therefore the tender response gives the Authority confidence that most of the requirements will be met to a suitable standard. |
| Weak | 20 | Substantially addresses the requirements but not all and provides supporting information that is of limited or no relevance or a methodology containing significant weaknesses and therefore raises concerns for the Authority that the requirements may not all be met. |
| Unacceptable | 0 | No response or provides a response that gives the Authority no confidence that the requirement will be met. |

Technical evaluation is assessed using the evaluation topics and sub-criteria stated in the Evaluation Criteria section above.

Separate submissions for each technical question should be provided and will be evaluated in isolation. Tenderers should provide answers that meet the criteria of each technical question.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Methodology | Detailed Evaluation Criteria |
| Q1 Provide details of the methodology and approaches proposed to deliver the requirements of this project.  Responses should not exceed four sides of A4, and use Arial font, size 11. | Your response should:   * 1. Your response should demonstrate a clear understanding of the nature of the requirements.   2. Be a clear, practical, achievable, and cost-effective methodology to deliver the requirements.   3. Ensure full method statement for all lab analysis are included, only using open-source protocols.   4. Ensure all deliverables are outlined as per the requirement. Where possible, include an example outputs.   5. Have information in sufficient detail to allow a full appraisal of the suitability of the approach to deliver for the project.   6. Acknowledge that all outputs will be owned by Natural England.   7. State sample store protocols and commitment. |

|  |  |
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| Quality Assurance Measures | Detailed Evaluation Criteria |
| Q2 How will you ensure quality of service throughout all stages of the project? | Your response should:   * 1. Include details on the measures taken to avoid sample contamination in the lab.   2. Detail what Performance/Quality Monitoring systems you will use, highlight any ISO accreditation.   3. Include what actions you will take to ensure the performance and quality of the service, providing example procedural documents. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Project management structure and processes | Detailed Evaluation Criteria |
| Q3 Please provide details of the core team and processes that will be assigned to the project. | Your response should:  1) Set out your team structure and key personnel for all stages of the project, including each team member’s role and responsibilities, and continuity planning. Include any sub-contractors contributing to the project.  2) Detail your processes for undertaking ongoing management throughout the project to deliver a consistently high-quality service and continuity of resource.  3) Outline your commitment to the project timeline included in this RFQ, or state otherwise. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Project experience | Detailed Evaluation Criteria |
| Q4 Provide details of recent experience carrying out similar contracts | Your response should:  1) Provide a selection of relevant project experience by both company, and key personnel.  2) If used, provide relevant experience of any sub-contractors contributing to the project. |

Commercial (50%)

The Contract is to be awarded as a fixed price which will be paid according to the completion of the deliverables stated in the Specification of Requirements.

Suppliers are required to submit a total cost to provide the deliverables stated in the Specification of Requirements. In addition to this the Commercial Response template must be completed to provide a breakdown of the whole life costs against each deliverable used in the delivery of this requirement.

Calculation Method

The method for calculating the weighted scores is as follows:

* Commercial

Score = (Lowest Quotation Price / Supplier’s Quotation Price ) x [50%] (Maximum available marks)

* Technical

Score = (Bidder’s Total Technical Score / Highest Technical Score) x[50%] (Maximum available marks)

The total score (weighted) (TWS) is then calculated by adding the total weighted commercial score (WC) to the total weighted technical score (WT): WC + WT = TWS.

Information to be returned

Please note, the following information requested must be provided. Incomplete tender submissions may be discounted.

Please complete and return the following information:

* completed Commercial Response template
* separate response submission for each technical question (in accordance with the response instructions)
* completed Mandatory Requirements (Annex 1)
* completed Acceptance of Terms and Conditions (Annex 2)

Award

Once the evaluation of the Response(s) is complete all suppliers will be notified of the outcome via email.

The successful supplier will be issued the contract via a Purchase Order.

Annex 1 Mandatory Requirements

Part 1 Potential Supplier Information

Please answer the following self-declaration questions in full and include this Annex in your quotation response.

Part 1.1 Potential Supplier Information:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question no. | Question | Response |
| 1.1(a) | Full name of the potential supplier submitting the information |  |
| 1.1(b) | Registered office address (if applicable) |  |
| 1.1(c) | Company registration number (if applicable) |  |
| 1.1(d) | Charity registration number (if applicable) |  |
| 1.1(e) | Head office DUNS number (if applicable) |  |
| 1.1(f) | Registered VAT number |  |
| 1.1(g) | Are you a Small, Medium or Micro Enterprise (SME)? | (Yes / No) |

Note: See EU definition of SME <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en>

Part 1.2 Contact details and declaration

By submitting a quotation to this RFQ I declare that to the best of my knowledge the answers submitted and information contained in this document are correct and accurate.

I declare that, upon request and without delay you will provide the certificates or documentary evidence referred to in this document.

I understand that the information will be used in the selection process to assess my organisation’s suitability to be invited to participate further in this procurement.

I understand that the authority may reject this submission in its entirety if there is a failure to answer all the relevant questions fully, or if false/misleading information or content is provided in any section.

I am aware of the consequences of serious misrepresentation.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question no. | Question | Response |
| 1.2(a) | Contact name |  |
| 1.2(b) | Name of organisation |  |
| 1.2(c) | Role in organisation |  |
| 1.2(d) | Phone number |  |
| 1.2(e) | E-mail address |  |
| 1.2(f) | Postal address |  |
| 1.2(g) | Signature (electronic is acceptable) |  |
| 1.2(h) | Date |  |

Part 2 Exclusion Grounds

Part 2.1 Grounds for mandatory exclusion

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question no. | Question | Response |
| 2.1(a) | Please indicate if, within the past five years you, your organisation or any other person who has powers of representation, decision or control in the organisation been convicted anywhere in the world of any of the offences within the summary below. | |
|  | Participation in a criminal organisation. | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Corruption. | ((Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Fraud. | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Money laundering or terrorist financing | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Child labour and other forms of trafficking in human beings | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
| 2.1(b) | If you have answered yes to question 2.1(a), please provide further details.  Date of conviction, specify which of the grounds listed the conviction was for, and the reasons for conviction.  Identity of who has been convicted  If the relevant documentation is available electronically please provide the web address, issuing authority, precise reference of the documents. |  |
| 2.1 (c) | If you have answered Yes to any of the points above have measures been taken to demonstrate the reliability of the organisation despite the existence of a relevant ground for exclusion? (i.e. Self-Cleaning) | (Yes / No) |
| 2.1(d) | Has it been established, for your organisation by a judicial or administrative decision having final and binding effect in accordance with the legal provisions of any part of the United Kingdom or the legal provisions of the country in which the organisation is established (if outside the UK), that the organisation is in breach of obligations related to the payment of tax or social security contributions? | (Yes / No) |
| 2.1(e) | If you have answered yes to question 2.3(a), please provide further details. Please also confirm you have paid or have entered into a binding arrangement with a view to paying, the outstanding sum including where applicable any accrued interest and/or fines. |  |

Part 2.2 Grounds for discretionary exclusion

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question no. | Question | Response |
| 2.2(a) | The detailed grounds for discretionary exclusion of an organisation are set out on this [webpage](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/551130/List_of_Mandatory_and_Discretionary_Exclusions.pdf), which should be referred to before completing these questions.  Please indicate if, within the past three years, anywhere in the world any of the following situations have applied to you, your organisation or any other person who has powers of representation, decision or control in the organisation | |
| 2.2(b) | Breach of environmental obligations? | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f) |
| 2.2(c) | Breach of social obligations? | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f) |
| 2.2(d) | Breach of labour law obligations? | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f) |
| 2.2(e) | Shown significant or persistent deficiencies in the performance of a substantive requirement under a prior public contract, a prior contract with a contracting entity, or a prior concession contract, which led to early termination of that prior contract, damages or other comparable sanctions? | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f) |
| 2.2 (f) | If you have answered Yes to any of the above, explain what measures been taken to demonstrate the reliability of the organisation despite the existence of a relevant ground for exclusion? (Self Cleaning) |  |

Annex 2 Acceptance of Terms and Conditions

I/We accept in full the terms and conditions appended to this Request for Quote document.

Company \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

