**Market Engagement for Genetic Evaluation Services**

AHDB (the Authority) is seeking market engagement to inform the procurement required for services relating to the calculation of the genetic merit of farmed ruminant livestock, more specifically, of dairy-breed bull and cow Predicted Transmitting Abilities (“PTAs”), and beef and sheep estimated breeding values (“EBVs”) in the UK. The Authority will seek candidates (“the Supplier”) to help to deliver routine genetic evaluations and to maximise the role and develop improved effectiveness of genetic evaluations. PTAs and EBVs are measures of the extent to which particular traits are passed on to an animal’s offspring.

The successful Supplier will be required to secure access to, extract and validate relevant data from databases provided by industry and government and use these data to run the genetic evaluations, producing the PTAs/EBVs and other such indexes and parameters that may be required and prepare the output for industry communications by the Authority. The successful candidate will need to be able to access data from a range of data providers. The authority will investigate the willingness of the current Data Providers to give permission to supply the following data to the Supplier for the Services:

* + Milk recording data from all providers of milk recording services
	+ Government databases
	+ Abattoir companies
	+ Breed / Herdbook Societies
	+ Feed intake data

The successful candidate will work alongside the Authority to ensure systems are kept current and are effective in providing timely and accurate data.

Genomic evaluation forms a large part of genetic evaluations. The role required of the successful candidate will likely include (but is not limited to) the provision of software, hardware, programmes, programming services, development of genetic indexes and ad-hoc consultancy.

The successful Supplier will also be required to liaise with Interbull, in providing genetic index information to Interbull, and subsequent incorporation of Interbull data into the UK PTAs.

**About the Authority**

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (“AHDB”) is a non-departmental government body, funded by levy income. The role of the AHDB is to help improve the efficiency and competitiveness of various agriculture and horticulture sectors within the UK. Our statutory functions encompass meat and livestock (cattle, sheep and pigs) in England; horticulture, milk and potatoes in Great Britain; cereals and oilseeds in the UK.

The responsibility for setting and delivering strategies to deploy AHDB levy income is delegated to the executive boards of our six sector divisions: Horticulture; Beef & Lamb; Dairy; Cereals and Oilseeds; Pigs; and Potatoes.

**About Genetic Evaluations Services**

The role of genetic evaluation is to improve the UK industry’s sustainability and profitability by enabling livestock producers to increase efficiency through animal breeding. AHDB’s services are central to the provision of Genetic Evaluations to the industry. It has established itself as a trusted, independent and innovative service, which promotes the profitable use of genetics to benefit UK producers. The services to be performed by the successful candidate will underpin the AHDB programme.

**About the services to be provided (as currently envisaged)**

The successful candidate will be responsible for acquiring the full databases from the various data providers, extracting the relevant data, merging data where necessary, and validate raw data prior to finalising the genetic evaluations to be delivered by a team of experienced cattle and sheep geneticists. Evaluations will be carried out using the most appropriate software based on the latest developments in genetic analysis. For this purpose the Supplier will be expected to have experience of MIX99.

Once calculated the successful candidate will do the necessary post-processing Quality Assurance and be responsible for dissemination of the resulting genetic information to the Authority, and will assist the Authority in disseminating the results to the industry – including the preparation of files to go onto the Authority’s website.

It will be the responsibility of the successful Supplier to establish a relationship and appropriate contractual arrangements with data providers for continuous provision of the data required for the evaluations.

The PTAs/EBVs and associated reliability/accuracy values currently evaluated can be viewed on the AHDB/Signet Breeding Services web pages, although the Authority expects these to be extended with natural development of the service.

In addition, the successful candidate will calculate inbreeding percentages.

An important element of the continuous improvement of the services is the ability to conduct academically rigorous research and development on genetics and genomics to ensure that the latest scientific understanding is incorporated into the evaluations.

The estimated start date for the contract is 1 April 2020.

**Questions**

Prospective Suppliers interested in delivering the Service should provide:

1. A brief (maximum two pages of A4) description of:
	1. their legal status and main functions which the Authority will use to communicate with the data providers to seek their willingness to supply data.
	2. their approach to delivering the service, the skills and setup of the team and the facilities available to deliver the service.
	3. the service support that will be made available to the Authority during its normal working hours.
	4. Evidence of working with industry to secure data provision, manage large data sets and appropriate data security.
	5. Experience in the delivery of genetic evaluations for dairy and beef cattle and sheep.
	6. experience in producing genomic evaluations.
	7. experience of liaising with INTERBULL.
	8. experience in delivering research and development in genetic and genomics.

Furthermore, please give us your thoughts on the below

1. Describe what duration of contract you see as providing best VFM for AHDB and why?
2. Advise what commercial cost model would best incentivise your organisation to deliver ambitious KPIs
3. Are there any key risks or gaps in service that you have identified from the high level specification?
4. What specific services can you provide that will deliver VFM throughout the life of the contract?
5. What innovations do AHDB need to consider or be made aware of in working with yourself in delivery of this service?

Detailed responses are not required, but the Authority is seeking sufficient information to extend our knowledge of the market.

Responses are required by email to procurement@AHDB.org.uk by noon on the 12th April 2019.

Any queries can also be emailed to the same address. All questions will be anonymised and these will be published with answers on Contracts Finder after being answered to the requestor directly.

IT IS THE INTERESTED SUPPLIERS RESPONSIBILITY TO CHECK CONTRACT FINDER FOR ANY UPDATES

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THIS OPPORTUNITY AND WANT TO BE NOTIFIED OF ANY Q&A'S THAT WE PUBLISH - YOU NEED TO SELECT 'WATCH THIS NOTICE' AGAINST THIS TENDER IN ORDER TO RECEIVE ALERTS.