



Department
for Education

Commercial guidance: an associate guide to the RFQ submission and evaluation process

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Background

In March 2016 the Department for Education (DfE) launched the Educational and Children's Social Care Professionals (ECSC) Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) to support the engagement of associates in line with public sector procurement regulations. Information and guidance on how to register on the ECSC DPS are available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

The DPS is managed through the Redimo2 electronic system to enable bids to be invited, evaluated and contracts awarded for a wide range of DfE activities. The implementation of the DPS ensures DfE complies with our obligations of equal treatment and non-discrimination when awarding contracts to associates.

What happens when I respond to an RFQ?

Preparing your submission

When a Request for Quotation (RFQ) is published the document will contain the following information:

- **Background to the requirement**
- **Detailed requirement specification**
- **Mandatory Requirements**

These may not be applicable in all cases. The mandatory requirements are designated by the internal stakeholder and enable the evaluators to ensure that explicit requirements are met. Bids that do not meet the mandatory requirements may be deemed non-compliant. Non-compliant bids will not be evaluated.

- **Evaluation Criteria**

These consist of the technical requirements, where a quality response is required. There will be specific look fors and weightings attributed to individual criteria.

- **Item Prices**

Item prices may be contained within the evaluation criteria, rather than as a separate section. The standard weighting for an RFQ is 80% for Technical Requirements and 20% for Item Prices.

When entering an item price enter the value as a number. Do not include any £ signs or commas, as the system does not recognise this format.

Non-Compliance

Examples of non compliant bids include:

Bids which do not meet the mandatory requirement(s).

Bids which do not include a price quotation or where the quotation is not provided in the correct format.

Bids which have not fully answered all relevant questions (in RFQs which are split into Lots it may be reasonable for bidders to only respond to the relevant questions. This will be made clear in the RFQ documentation).

Hints and tips

Against each evaluation criteria in the RFQ we will publish the question weighting and any specific 'look fors' that will be used by the evaluation panel. It is recommended that, where possible, you include evidence for each look for in your response to the question.

Please provide an answer for each question explicitly. References to answers in other questions/sections may not be considered, and could result in a lower score being applied.

Evaluators can not take into account previous knowledge of your delivery unless it is included in the bid, therefore please do be explicit about outcomes you have delivered and provide clear evidence and examples of your skills and experience.

The Redimo2 system does not have sophisticated formatting functionality. We would recommend writing your bid in Word (or other word processing package) and then pasting into the Redimo2 system, that way you keep record of your submission (including consideration of any word count limits) and can spell check.

The system is web based, and will only allow a certain period of 'down time' before it will time out. At this point any unsaved work will be lost. We therefore recommend that you save your work at frequent intervals to avoid any loss of data.

Submitting your bid

Tender responses need to be made electronically through REDIMO2 by completing evaluation sections and questions. There is no longer a requirement to submit a 'bid document' or to send any documents via email or post.

RFQs are structured in a series of stages. Within the main 'questionnaire' stage will be a range of questions that you must answer. Once you have entered your answer in the relevant field and/or uploaded an attachment, please click on the save icon to ensure you do not lose your changes. Repeat this for all questions.

Once you have completed all the stages, you will be able to submit your bid. You can still make changes to your response at any point up to the RFQ deadline. Once the deadline has passed the system will not allow any changes.

If you have any questions about an RFQ these should be submitted in writing by viewing and adding messages within REDIMO2.

No part of your response is visible to DfE until the expiry deadline has passed. Once the deadline has passed bids will be formally 'opened' within the Redimo2 system, and your responses will be available for evaluation by DfE.

At this point you will receive an email confirming that your submission has been received.

Evaluating bids

The Commercial lead will review each submission to check that it is compliant. Any bids which have not been submitted correctly, or which do not meet the stated mandatory requirements will be deemed non-compliant and will be eliminated and not evaluated further.

At this point the Commercial lead will notify the evaluation panel that bids are available to evaluate.

The evaluation panel will be made up of 2 or more people and will usually comprise the Programme Manager (according to the requirement), Senior Programme Manager, and relevant subject matter experts. Panel members may potentially include external evaluators not directly employed by DfE dependent on the nature of the requirement. Commercial will provide guidance to evaluators and where appropriate oversee the evaluation process to ensure it offers equal treatment and is applied consistently.

Each evaluator will assess all bids individually in line with DfE’s Bid Evaluation Code of Conduct.

Each evaluator will be asked to provide notes to support their scoring and to enable feedback to be provided to bidders upon request.

Once the entire panel have scored all bids the Buyer will review the scores for each response. In the event that there is a variation of scores for a question then this score will be moderated.

A moderation meeting will be held during which the evaluation panel will meet to review each identified question requiring moderation. The panel will discuss the response to the question in conjunction with any notes and will reach a consensus opinion on the score. This consensus score will then be applied.

The scores will be calculated against the question weightings, and against the overall section weightings to deliver an overall score.

The standard weighting for sections is:

Item prices	20%
Mandatory Requirements	0%
Technical Requirements	80%
Further information	0%

This is DfE’s standard approach to ensure that bids are evaluated on quality as well as value for money. DfE reserves the right to vary these weightings dependent on the requirement.

Contracts are awarded on the basis of the ‘Most Economically Advantageous Tender’. Please refer to DfE’s Policy for Educational and Children’s Social Care Professionals rates found in the ECSC handbook which is attached to the [Contracts Finder notice](#) for additional guidance.

Where a bid is deemed to be below the required quality threshold, DfE reserves the right not to award a contract, even if the price quoted is the most cost effective.

Weightings will be clearly shown in the RFQ documentation.

In the event that further clarification is required from any bidding organisations the Commercial lead will coordinate requesting and collating the information and oversee the evaluation of any evidence provided.

Contract award

Once the evaluation process is complete a list of organisations and their overall scores will be produced, enabling a preferred bidder list to be produced.

DfE will use the preferred bidder list to award contracts dependent on the number of associates required.

Each successful bidder will receive an email to confirm the contract award, which will include a copy of the RFQ document and a Special Conditions document detailing the agreed contract value, contract term and applicable data handling schedule.

The Commercial lead will confirm the contract award with the Contract Manager via email. Successful associates will then be contacted by the Contract Manager, who will initiate the work as defined in the requirement.

All unsuccessful bidders will receive an email advising them that they have not been successful on this occasion. At this point bidders can request feedback on the RFQ by contacting the appropriate Commercial lead.

In order to manage the volume of feedback requests effectively we request that bidders submit requests for feedback within 10 working days of the receipt of notification that they have been unsuccessful.

Please note that we provide feedback on a RFQ basis, and would not provide feedback for more than one RFQ at a time.

The feedback will be given in the form of a letter with summarised notes from the evaluation panel.



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