



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk  
www.defra.gov.uk

**Your ref:** 481/13  
**Our ref:** RFI 5877  
**Date:** 31 October 2013

Dear

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Qualifications required to be part of the procurement process of projects and to sign off spend.**

Thank you for your request for information about the level of training, qualifications and experience required for civil servants involved in signing off spend and in the procurement process of projects, which we received on 4 October 2013. As you know, we have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You asked for the following information:

- 1) The level of training required for civil servants involved in signing off on spending of up to £500,000.
- 2) The level of training required for civil servants involved in signing off on spending of up to £1 million.
- 3) The level of training required for civil servants involved in signing off on spending of up to £10 million.
- 4) The level of training required for civil servants involved in signing off on spending above £10 million.
- 5) The qualifications required for civil servants involved in signing off on spending of £500,000
- 6) The qualifications required for civil servants involved in signing off on spending of up to £1 million.
- 7) The qualifications required for civil servants involved in signing off on spending of up to £10 million.
- 8) The qualifications required for civil servants involved in signing off on spending above £10 million.
- 9) The experience required for civil servants involved in signing off on spending of £500,000



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE

- 10) The experience required for civil servants involved in signing off on spending of up to £1 million.
- 11) The experience required for civil servants involved in signing off on spending of up to £10 million.
- 12) The experience required for civil servants involved in signing off on spending above £10 million.
- 13) The level of training required for civil servants involved in the procurement process of projects up to £500,000.
- 14) The level of training required for civil servants involved in the procurement process of projects up to £1 million.
- 15) The level of training required for civil servants involved in the procurement process of projects up to £10 million.
- 16) The level of training required for civil servants involved in the procurement process of projects above £10 million.
- 17) The qualifications required for civil servants involved in the procurement process of projects up to £500,000.
- 18) The qualifications required for civil servants involved in the procurement process of projects up to £1 million.
- 19) The qualifications required for civil servants involved in the procurement process of projects up to £10 million.
- 20) The qualifications required for civil servants involved in the procurement process of projects above £10 million.
- 21) The experience required for civil servants involved in the procurement process of projects up to £500,000.
- 22) The experience required for civil servants involved in the procurement process of projects up to £1 million.
- 23) The experience required for civil servants involved in the procurement process of projects up to £10 million.
- 24) The experience required for civil servants involved in the procurement process of projects above £10 million.

**In response to questions 1-4 and 13-16:**

There is no specific training mandated for civil servants for signing off different levels of expenditure, or for those involved in the procurement process. However, training and internal online guidance is available for all staff on how to approve goods and services.

No civil servant below the level of Grade 6 (the grade immediately preceding entry to the Senior Civil Service (SCS)) can approve expenditure of more than £100,000. A Grade 6 can approve up to £500,000. Staff within the SCS can approve expenditure of up to £3,000,000 as standard.



If, for any reason, a member of staff at any grade requires a higher approval limit, they must submit a supporting business case to their Director General. If the increase is granted, this will only be implemented on a temporary basis.

We are currently rolling out training on procurement rules, specification, evaluation and contract management for those in business areas most often involved in significant procurements. For each procurement, the relevant member of staff receives guidance and training on good process and the IT tools they will use.

Procurements below £10,000 are undertaken entirely by line managers in business areas. There is guidance for staff to follow in our Procurement Policy, and on our internal website on the Department's 'No Contract No Purchase Order' policy.

**In response to questions 5-8 and 17-20:**

There are no specific qualifications required for civil servants involved in signing off expenditure or who are involved in the procurement process outside of those professional groups that support or lead the finance and procurement activities across the Department.

**In response to questions 9-12 and 21-24:**

There is no specific experience required for civil servants involved in signing off expenditure or who are involved in the procurement process. However, to achieve promotion through the various civil service grades, staff are required to demonstrate the competencies detailed in the Civil Service Competency Framework, a copy of which can be found at <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Civil-Service-Competency-Framework-July-2012.pdf>.

Particularly pertinent to this subject are the competencies covering 'Delivering Value For Money' and 'Making Effective Decisions'.

Senior Civil Servants, who will sign off expenditure over £500,000, will usually have significant experience of working at a high level in the civil service or in an equivalent private sector role.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA, and in keeping with the government's Transparency Agenda, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you will now be published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. Please note that this will not include your personal data.

I attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

I also attach Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me.

Yours

**Pam Beadman**

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## Annex A

### Copyright

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## Annex B

### Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Mike Kaye, Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: [requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk)) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF