

Highways Agency Requirements Statement for Approved List of Equality Framework Suppliers

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Having given 'due regard' to the three arms of the Public Sector Equality Duty, one of the equality objectives that the Highways Agency has set itself is 'to encourage our supply chain to take the next incremental step in improving equality outcomes' (*Making a Difference 2012-2016*).
- 1.2 As part of this work the Agency wants to establish an approved list of existing Equality Frameworks, which allow voluntary self-assessment and the monitoring of equality progress over time, that can it can recommend for use to its suppliers.

For the Agency, an 'Equality Framework' is a tool that is designed to support systematic and structured improvement in equality outcomes and deliver improved services and employment practices. It provides a standard approach to the integration of equalities into all functions, policies and practices within an organisation.

The final list will consist of two parts, Part A and Part B. Part A will contain details of those suppliers that the Highways Agency have assessed to be more closely aligned to its specific requirements (those achieving at least 60% of the available marks). Part B will contain details of other suppliers, whilst not so closely aligned to the specific requirements of the Highways Agency, may still offer services that we believe may be of interest and relevance to areas of our supply chain.

- 1.3 This document sets out the Agency's requirements and evaluation criteria for Equality Frameworks to qualify for inclusion on its approved list.

2. Background

- 2.1 In developing our equality objectives, the Agency has considered our equality performance in three broad areas:

WHAT service we deliver i.e the extent to which we effectively factor in the needs of diverse end users/ those affected by our work into decisions about and the design of the end product/service.

HOW the service is delivered i.e. the extent to which we effectively and sensitively engage with and respond to the needs of diverse end users/those affected by our work as projects/schemes/programmes etc are progressed.

WHO delivers the service i.e. the extent to which we are delivering against our commitment to being an equal opportunities employer.

- 2.2 In all three areas, the Agency concluded that one of our greatest opportunities to make a difference in equality outcomes lies in working with and through our supply chain:

- Over 90% of spend is through our supply chain. Of that spend; the bulk goes to consultants and contractors (herein referred to as 'our suppliers') delivering major projects or maintenance work – the design, development and delivery.
- The first tier of this supply chain employs more than 25,000 people operating across the country. Thousands of road workers deliver on the ground interfacing with road users and communities on a daily basis.
- Early analysis indicates that our major suppliers are at different stages of their journeys towards identifying and tackling inequality.
- Work over the past 2 years with a voluntary group of supplier representatives focussing on diversity in employment and service delivery, suggests that there is an

- 2.3 The next step for each of our suppliers will depend on where they are in their development and implementation of effective equality practices and we expect that each supplier's journey will be unique. The Highways Agency wants to recommend 'Equality Frameworks' to be used as a tool to support our suppliers' consideration of what that next step should be.
- 2.4 We understand there to be a selection of frameworks within the market. Use of an Equality Framework will be encouraged but not mandated. It is important that we are confident that Frameworks we recommend will add value and support our suppliers to take their next incremental step in improving equality outcomes in their business.
- 2.5 Having carried out research in 2013, we understand that the equality framework market is relatively young, unregulated and as yet there is no recognised national equality standard to provide a benchmark. We also understand that given these market conditions, equality framework providers are concerned to protect their intellectual property.
- 2.6 This exercise invites equality framework providers to share in commercial confidence the content of their products and services.

3. Requirement

3.1 Minimum Characteristics

To be included on the Highways Agency's approved list, Equality Frameworks (EF) must demonstrate the following characteristics:

- a) Not a superficial exercise but encourages genuine incremental progress over a sustained period of time.
- b) Pragmatic and practical
- c) Inputs clear advice, intelligence and examples of the specific actions that will support clients to improve their equality outcomes

EF will be assessed against these and the requirements at 3.2 below.

3.2 Requirements

The aim is to produce an approved list that contains a range of suppliers to meet all or some of the requirements listed below. To be included on the HA's approved list EF providers will need to provide evidence that their products and services can make a significant contribution towards achieving coverage of the following:

- a) EF clearly describes the different performance levels organisations will go through as they progress towards leading equality performance.
- b) EF is relevant to different sized suppliers (SME to multinational) and can also be adapted for use at either a corporate or divisional level within a supplier organisation.
- c) EF is relevant to suppliers at different levels of maturity in relation to equality and diversity performance (must support those at the start of their journey and stretch those who are leading).
- d) EF covers all of the areas defined in 2.1 (What, How and Who).

- e) EF covers suppliers in their different roles as service provider, supply chain manager, employer.
- f) EF provides appropriate support to suppliers in identifying and taking the next incremental step across the three areas and in relation to their different roles.
- g) Cost of EF is not a barrier to use and is responsive to the resourcing levels of the supplier.
- h) EF is easy to use (e.g. easy to understand and operate, requiring minimal administrative support, designed to operate on commercial off the shelf IT packages that one would expect to find in most UK businesses).
- i) EF acknowledges the risk of generating perverse outcomes and has effective strategies for reducing this.

4. Submissions

Please provide responses to each of the sections detailed below:

- 4.1 Provide a copy of your Equality Framework and complete the tables in Annex A. Please include reference to relevant sections of your Framework in column D of Table 2 to support your responses.
- 4.2 Provide a summary of the key challenges facing road sector in improving equality outcomes in employment, service delivery and supply chain management. (500 words maximum)
- 4.3 Provide evidence of the impact of work done with clients. (2500 words maximum)

Please select up to a maximum of 5 organisations you have provided an equality service to in the last 3 years.

Provide us with summary information on how your services supported them to improve their equality performance in any or all of the following areas:

- employment,
- service delivery
- supply chain management

Please include for each example:

- The name of the client
- The equality performance of the client before the service was provided & how gauged
- The nature of the service provided
- The equality performance of the client after the service was provided, how and when gauged, and value added in business terms
- Lessons learned
- Client references – these may be taken up for any necessary clarifications or confirmation of evidence following assessment and interviews.

5. Evaluation Methodology and Criteria

Quality criteria for 'Equality Frameworks'

Primary Criteria	Sub-criteria	Score	Weighting	Weighted score
Capable staff	Suitability of key personnel	10	4	40
Sector Knowledge	Understanding of sector and the challenges it faces in improving equality outcomes	10	1	10
Quality product and services	Demonstrates that framework product has the minimum characteristics	10	1	10
	Demonstrates that framework services have the minimum characteristics	10	1	10
Staff, product and services have impact	Equality Framework Providers prior performance in improving client equality outcomes in the road sector (or equivalent)	10	3	30
Total Marks Available:				100

The assessment panel will use the marking system as shown below, to award marks for approach or evidence, as relevant to the sub-criteria in the previous table.

Score	Reason	Mark
Unacceptable	The evidence demonstrates an inadequate understanding of the sector or equivalent. There is little or no evidence that the products and services meet the minimum requirements and no evidence that products and services are effecting positive change in the equality performance of clients. There is evidence that staff capability is insufficient and that there is little or no continuing professional development taking place. There is no evidence of the companies applying equality policies in their own practice.	1-2
Weak	The evidence demonstrates a basic understanding of the sector or equivalent. There is some evidence that the products and services meet the minimum requirements and some evidence that the equality performance of clients using the products and services is improving. There is evidence that staff have basic capability and that there is some continuing professional development taking place. There is some evidence that company is applying equality policies in their own practice.	3-5
Good	The evidence demonstrates a good understanding of the sector or equivalent. There is good evidence that the products and services meet the minimum requirements and strong evidence that the equality performance of clients using the products and services is improving. There is evidence that staff have good capability and are able to influence client practice, attitudes and behaviours	6-8

	to achieve improved outcomes. There is strong evidence of continuing professional development and the implementation of equality policies in their own company practice.	
Excellent	The evidence demonstrates an excellent understanding of the sector and indicates that the equality framework provider is leading thinking and practice at a national/sectoral level. There is substantial evidence that products and services exceed minimum requirements and that the equality performance of clients using the products and services is rapidly improving. There is substantial evidence that staff are having a significant impact on client practice, attitudes and behaviours. There is very strong evidence of continuing professional development and the implementation, evaluation and iteration of equality policies in their own company practice.	9-10

The minimum requirement for inclusion in Part A of the Approved List is to reach a threshold of 60% of the total marks available. A submission scoring less than 60% will be included in Part B. Following assessment and prior to publication of the final list, suppliers will be contacted and advised whether they are to be included in Part A or Part B and their confirmation sought as to whether or not they wish their details to remain on the list for publication.

All suppliers will be invited to attend a validation interview. As a result of the interviews, we will review whether suppliers should remain on list A or be placed on List B.

6. Programme

The anticipated programme is as follows –

10 th January 2014	-	PIN Published
29 th January 2014	-	Deadline for Expressions of Interest
21 st February 2014	-	Deadline for receipt of submissions
24 th – 28 th February 2014	-	Assessment of submissions received
6 th – 7 th March 2014	-	Validation Interviews
11 th – 12 th March 2014	-	Validation Interviews
End March 2014	-	Publication of final Approved List.

Annex A

Table 1

Company Information	
Supplier Name	
Framework Name	
Company Profile	
Contact details	
Size of organisation (No. of employees)	
Capacity to respond to potential demand across England (Please provide details of how you would respond to and effectively meet a potential increase in demand for your services should this occur)	
Staff information	
Evidence of depth of equality and diversity knowledge and experience	Please include CVs of key staff involved in development and delivery of services to clients
Evidence of continuing professional development in relation to equality and diversity expertise	
Evidence of company equality policies in action	

Table 2



Table 2 - Equality Frameworks.xls