

Ability to Deliver

Distance Learning Workbook

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1. Introduction and background

During a tendering process, the purchasing organisation will evaluate the ability of bidders to deliver the goods or services required. To assess this, written submissions are requested from the bidding organisation. This means that you need to be able to express your 'ability to deliver', in writing.

This workbook has been written to ensure that you understand what a public sector body is expecting of you, in terms of ability to deliver, during a tendering process.

Whilst each workbook covers a particular topic they are interlinked. For example, information relating to equal opportunities, quality and environment can assist you in demonstrating your ability to deliver, through meeting key public sector evaluation criteria.

Throughout the main part of this workbook there are opportunities to reflect on what you have read and what this may mean for your business. It is important that you complete as many of the activities as you can as they have been designed to help you move towards successfully competing for public sector contracts.

The material and activities should be thought provoking and challenging. If you have a procurement mentor, they can help you to plan how best to address the issues that the text and activities have identified.

One of the challenges is getting to grips with some of the jargon. This is explained throughout, and in a 'jargon buster' at the end.

We recommend that you spend a total of at least half a day (three and a half hours) working on this work book..

2 Aims and objectives of workbook

The overall aims and objectives of this workbook are to:

- ❑ Emphasise the importance of you being able to demonstrate your experience and capabilities through the written word.
- ❑ Assist you in expressing your abilities in the bidding process.
- ❑ Assist you in maximising value from your existing customer list through the development of case studies.

The key to any tendering process is being able to market your experience, capabilities and skills through the written word. This can be quite challenging, especially for those organisations involved with the supply of practical services.

For example: if you make sandwiches, you will need to prove in writing that you make the best sandwiches. The evaluation panel will only get a chance to taste your sandwiches if you get through to the final stages of the tendering process.

3 Public sector procurement processes: Evaluating 'Ability to Deliver'

To assess the ability of your company to deliver the contract specification, a public sector purchaser will evaluate your past experience and competencies in the following areas:

Information relating to your contracting history:

- Financial penalties
- Contract terminations
- Unsuccessful contract renewals
- Defaults leading to early termination.

This provides the awarding authority with information relating to quality of delivery, customer satisfaction and your ability to meet the key project deliverables.

Ability of employees to deliver:

- Experience and qualifications
- Employee records and internal assessment processes.

The successful delivery of the project is largely dependent on the skills and experience of your staff. Therefore, information is required on their experience and qualifications to ensure that they have the necessary competencies to deliver the project. It is important, therefore, to tailor the experience and qualifications of your employees to the key competencies and knowledge required to meet the project outcomes.

Questions relating to employee records and internal assessment processes are linked to both your legal employment obligations as an employer and to the implementation of best practice human resource policies and procedures. The ultimate ability of your employees to deliver high value quality solutions to your customers is essentially determined by your ability to manage and motivate your team.

Professional References:

- Value of work
- Type of work.

Always inform your referees that you have provided them as a reference and the nature of the work that you are tendering for. Also remind them of similar work that you have undertaken with them in the past. In this way you are preparing them to communicate a positive message about the work that you have carried out and your company as a provider.

3.1 Pre-Qualification Questionnaires (PQQ)

This section makes use of questions from a Haringey Council PQQ . This is used to highlight the type of information that is being requested in ‘the ability to deliver’ section in a typical PQQ and to demonstrate what is required by you to accurately answer the various questions.

Text from the PQQ itself is reproduced below:

Suppliers must demonstrate that they have the ability and experience to fulfil any orders and contractual obligations that they may be given, to the standard expected by Haringey Council. An element of this would be the employment of suitably qualified and experienced staff.

CONTRACTUAL MATTERS.

Please answer the following questions regarding contracts. **If the answer to any of the questions is ‘Yes’, please provide a full explanatory statement below.**

- C1 Has the Potential Provider or any of its named supply chain members ever suffered deductions for liquidated and/or ascertained damages in respect of any contract within the last two years?

	Please delete
Deductions for liquidated and/or ascertained damages	YES / NO
If yes, please answer the following two questions:	
Did the deduction exceed [£50,000]?	YES / NO
Was the deduction greater than [10%] of the whole life value of the contract?	YES / NO

- C2 Has the Potential Provider or any of its named supply chain members (sub – contractors) ever had a contract terminated or its employment determined under the terms of contract in the last three years?

Contract terminated / employment determined	YES / NO (please delete)
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Permanent staff numbers	Temporary or third party staff numbers	Total staff turnover as a percentage of staff employed over the past 2 years (Where significant changes have occurred in respect of key management or specialist staff this should be identified)

D2 Please provide details of requirements similar to those to be provided under the contract/framework agreement outlined in “the requirement” section of the PQQ, that the Potential Provider has delivered in the past two years. Please include dates or periods on which the requirements were provided, the contract values and the details of the recipient of the requirements.

Provision of similar services (300 words or fewer) Either insert required details or state ‘None’
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Dates or periods during which the requirements were provided. <li>❑ The contract values. <li>❑ The details of the recipient of the requirements.

D3 Please provide details of three major recent private sector contracts that the Potential Provider (but not any envisaged supply chain member (sub-contractor)) has been awarded for the provision of requirements similar to those outlined in “the requirement” section of the PQQ. The Authority reserves the right to contact any or all of these organisations for a reference and may wish to visit their premises. Potential providers should ensure that organisations listed would be willing to provide a reference for them and be willing to discuss the Potential Provider’s performance with the Authority.

Customer name and address	Contact name, telephone number and email address	Date contract awarded, plus start and finish dates	Contract reference and brief description of requirements undertaken (and value of contract)	Names of supply chain members (sub contractor s) and/ or consortium members and their role
1.				
2.				
3.				

D4 Please provide details of three major recent contracts that the Potential Provider (but not any envisaged supply chain member (sub-contractor)) has been awarded by the public sector including but not limited to, central government departments, agencies, local authorities or NHS Trusts for the provision of requirements similar to those outlined in “the requirement” section of the PQQ. The Authority reserves the right to contact any or all of these organisations for a reference and may wish to visit their premises. Potential providers should ensure that organisations listed would be willing to provide a reference for them and be willing to discuss the Potential Provider’s performance with the Authority.

Customer name and address	Contact name, telephone number and email address	Date contract awarded, plus start and finish dates	Contract reference and brief description of requirements undertaken (and value of contract)	Names of supply chain members (sub contractor s) and/ or consortium members and their role
1.				
2.				
3.				

Activity 1

Consider how you would answer the questions in the above PQQ. Could you provide supporting documentation, if it is required?

Are there questions that you cannot answer or material that you would find difficult to provide?

Make a note of it now, so that you can address those gaps before you engage in a tendering process.

4 Unique selling points

Key to a successful tender is your ability to market your key attributes through the written word. This requires the crafting together of language and words that both reflect your ability to deliver and a cultural empathy that fits with the awarding authority.

Before this can be achieved, it is imperative for you to have an excellent understanding of your company's unique selling points and/or best selling points. In any selling exercise you need to be able to convince the purchaser to use your services and products rather than those of your competitors.

Definition

Unique Selling Point (USP)

A USP is the unique product and/or service benefit of your company that you actively promote in a consistent manner to your target market. In today's marketplace it is extremely difficult to identify 'unique' selling points, but we can all identify the best selling points of our company. These are selling points that make you superior to your competitors.

Part of the Government's agenda of encouraging public sector procurers to 'think small first,' has been the message from the Office of Government Commerce and the Small Business Service on the benefits brought to the marketplace by small businesses. These include:

- Competition
- Lower cost base
- Flexibility
- Quality of service
- Innovation
- Specialist services/products.

A key to successful marketing is to reflect the language of the customer back to them. It is recommended, therefore, that these benefits be replicated in your communication with the public sector. And as small businesses, the above points should be inherent in your core business operations and mechanisms of delivery. They are what make you different from your bigger competitors and market leaders.

Activity 2

Do you know who your direct competitors are and their service/product offerings to the marketplace?

To identify your USPs or best selling points, you need to have a good understanding of your key competitors. Failing this you will battle to position yourself differently to your competitors and, thereby, find it difficult to convince potential customers to purchase your services and products.

Competitor Analysis Exercise

Undertake the following key steps to assist you to gain an overview of your direct competitors:

- ❑ Conduct an Internet search on your company type (e.g. recruitment agencies and consultancies), as listed in and covering your geographical location. Online telephone directories, such as Yell.com, provide an excellent facility for such searches.
- ❑ From the search list, identify your direct competitors – i.e. those companies who offer similar services and/or products.
- ❑ Undertake a brief search on each of the direct competitors to gain an insight into their service/product offerings, market position and USPs.

Whilst this is not a thorough or robust analysis of your competitor base, it will present you with a good overview.

Activity 3

Based on your competitor analysis and understanding of your key customer requirements, identify the USPs and/or best selling points of your company.

5 Developing case studies

Consider including case studies demonstrating your ability to deliver the goods or services being sought, with your PQQ and ITT submissions.

Whilst it is important to adapt your case studies to the project for which you are tendering, it is recommended that you develop a number of generic case studies. This will help you save time when you are under pressure to meet tendering deadlines and requirements.

Writing tips:

- Correctness: ensure your facts, punctuation, language, usage of words and spelling are correct.
- Conciseness: avoid irrelevant information, unnecessary words and long-winded explanations.
- Clearness: avoid ambiguity. Make sure that you write in a clear manner, providing information that will be easily understood by the reader.
- Coherence: present your ideas in an orderly and logical way.
- Keep it simple!
- Ask someone to proof read your writing to ensure correctness and that you are clearly communicating your objectives and intentions.

Avoid:

- Long sentences and verbosity: unnecessary use of a large number of words.
- Jargon: words and phrases used within your profession or industry, which people outside the industry might not understand.
- Different tenses. When you describe events it is better to use the past tense.
- Ambiguity: try to avoid your writing having two interpretations.

Activity 4

Pick five to ten customers. Answer the following questions:

- How long have you been working with the customer?
- What were the key project objectives and deliverables? What was your project scope?
- What was the value of the project and project duration?
- What key resources did you require to complete the project?

- What methodology and/or approach did you follow to ensure that the project deliverables and objectives were achieved within time and budget?

Can you make use of the 4C Best Value Methodology to inform your approach?

- Consult
- Compare
- Challenge
- Compete

What were your USPs and/or best selling points in achieving the project outcomes and project approach? Use the previous exercise on USPs to assist you. (See Activity 2 and 3)

Summarise the responses to these questions into a case study. Use the information to tell a story!

6 Adapting case studies to contract specification and requirements

From the contract specification, adapt and tweak your generic case studies to demonstrate your ability to deliver:

- ❑ You need to demonstrate your track record in delivering similar work through your case studies. In this way you want to remove any notions of risk in the purchaser's mind about your ability to deliver.
- ❑ Select your case studies carefully. You need to identify customers where your work was similar to the project you are bidding for. Tweak and adapt the chosen case studies to demonstrate that the:
 - (i) project brief was similar. Paraphrase project descriptions, as outlined in the specification.
 - (ii) project deliverables and objectives were similar.
 - (iii) project scope and size (budget/duration) were similar.
 - (iv) project methodology was similar and that it met the required objectives.
 - (v) project delivered customer satisfaction.
- ❑ Reflect a cultural empathy that fits with the organisation to which you are tendering. This can be achieved by reflecting an understanding of the values and objectives informing the organisation. Use the language, style and phrases of the awarding authority. This can be found in the tender pack and on the organisation's website.

7 Action Plan

7.1 Immediate

Having completed the workbook it is important that you identify any key actions that you need to implement as you prepare your business to compete in the public sector marketplace.

Identify up to three actions you need to implement as a result of completing this workbook. Don't forget to consider whose support you need and what resources are available to help you.

1. What action is required?

How will you know it has been successfully implemented?

2. What action is required?

How will you know it has been successfully implemented?

3. What action is required?

How will you know it has been successfully implemented?

7.2 Within 12 months

It would be unrealistic to expect a small business to formalise all its issues relating to ability to deliver overnight. As the business evolves equal opportunities will be a key consideration and systems, policies and procedures will need to be established.

Identify up to three priorities that should be addressed over the next 12 months. Again identify whose support you need and what resources are available to support your efforts.

1. What needs to be done?

How will you know it has been addressed?

2. What needs to be done?

How will you know it has been addressed?

3. What needs to be done?

How will you know it has been addressed?

8 Conclusions

Demonstrating your ability to deliver is a vital aspect of a public sector procurement process.

Getting this down on paper for the first time can be a challenging exercise – but once you have done so, it is relatively easy to adapt your material as appropriate for future tenders.

There are no shortcuts to this exercise. There are no templates to use, as your business is completely unique and each contract is different.

However, the material contained in this workbook should point you in all the right directions, so that you can document your processes and successes as clearly as possible. If you have a procurement mentor, they will be very happy to help you with this process.

Good luck!

9 Jargon Busters

Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ)

The initial questionnaire seeking information about a company such as financial status, legal compliance, customer base, policies and procedures, etc

Unique Selling Point (USP)

USPs are the unique product and/or service benefits of your company that you actively promote in a consistent manner to your target market.