



**Tendering Guidance**  
**Tips for Completing a Good PQQ / Tender**  
**Submission**

**November 2012**

## **Contents**

Contents .....	2
Introduction .....	3
What is a tender? .....	3
How are tenders evaluated? .....	3
What to consider when compiling your Tender .....	4
Characteristics of a Poor Tender.....	4
Characteristics of a Good Tender .....	5
Useful Checklist .....	5
Glossary .....	7

## **Introduction**

The main point of this document is to advise you on the issues to consider when completing tender documentation (Pre-qualification Questionnaires\* (PQQ) and Invitations to Tender\* (ITT), what to avoid, what to ensure and how to prepare the best tender to give you a chance of winning that contract.

This document is not designed to teach you how to “suck eggs” but those companies that have never gone through this process before (and even ones who have) may find some useful tips in here that will leave you safe in the knowledge that your company have submitted the best tender you could.

You should also remember though that each tender submission will be as different from the next, as the contracts will be different. The trick is, to know what to change and when it needs changing and hopefully this guide will help you to learn the keys to both of those things for your future tenders.

## **What is a tender?**

A tender can be described in a number of different ways, but could be most fully described as being “A written presentation, tailored towards the needs of the purchasing organisation, of your company’s ability to deliver the requirements of a contract, which is evaluated against set criteria to establish your suitability for undertaking the work to the standard required and within the budgets set.”

However in terms of this guidance it is probably better described as being “Your Company’s CV”. Like any good CV, a tender should set out clearly, with evidence, why your company can do the work required and it should be tailored to the requirement of the Council.

A tender process can sometimes start with a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire, though this can sometimes be incorporated into an ‘Invitation to Tender’.

## **How are tenders evaluated?**

All local authorities are bound by the same government rules and regulations which state that tenders must always list the evaluation criteria and the relative weightings in relation to the contract (including if an interview process will be involved) and will also give an indication as to the % weighting of Price ‘vs.’ Quality balance of the overall score.

It does not matter what process the authority uses to evaluate tender submissions, the important thing is what criteria tenders will be evaluated upon and that all tenders are treated equally and transparently.

It is also important to note at this point that tender submissions cannot be scored against criteria that are not listed in the tender documentation.

## **What to consider when compiling your Tender**

There are a number of other issues and factors that need to be taken into account before you can even begin to compile a tender submission. The answer given to the majority of these will most likely be highly dependant upon your organisation itself but also on the amount of knowledge you were provided with prior to the tender process. Some of the key issues to be aware of and that your company must be happy with before submitting a tender are as follows:

Can you deliver the requirements of the contract effectively for the entire life of the contract? – This is critical because if there are any significant doubts as to whether you can provide the level of service required then you might need to reconsider submitting a tender. Declining the opportunity to tender will not influence any future submissions, as tenders are all treated on their own merit.

What is there about your company that will make it stand out from the rest? Can you offer something innovative or specialist as part of your service? Perhaps you have an area of added value\* you can bring to the contract, which will give you that edge in the evaluation stage. Remember, Local Authority procurement is not usually just about price, as quality and whole-life-costs\* play a major part in the evaluation process. Your submission could be one of a large number of tender responses so anything that will make your submission stand out will help.

Local Authority requirements under the Freedom of Information Act 2000\*. The Freedom of Information Act is a law brought in to force on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005 to provide a general right of access to information held by public authorities to promote openness and accountability in our work. The Act applies retrospectively and unless covered by one of the exemptions of the Act, the Council is obliged to provide information held (incl. Information supplied by tenderers) within 20 days of receiving the request to do so. Information relating to the Act will be included in the tender documentation received but further information can be found on the websites listed in the “Useful Links” Section.

## **Characteristics of a Poor Tender**

What makes a good tender? The answer to this will be better explained and remembered if the characteristics of a ‘poor’ tender are explained so that first.

It is surprising easy for an evaluation team to spot a ‘poor’ tender, but it should be noted that a ‘poor’ tender is not always the result of bad practice; it can often simply be a case of someone not having the right guidance when they prepare their tender submissions. Therefore listed below are the key characteristics of a ‘poor’ tender so that you can ensure you don’t make the same mistakes.

1. Filled with significant errors and / or omissions\*
2. Illegible
3. Not well structured
4. Poorly presented
5. Inconsistent information
6. Compiled mainly from promotional material
7. Filled with additional documents that are not clearly referenced in the submission
8. Very generic (i.e. not tailored specifically to the requirements of the contract)
9. Not evidenced

10. Lacking in detail and effort
11. Answers refer to 'parent' company and not the actual applicant.
12. Lacking in any Added Value (where applicable)
13. Not complied in line with the Instructions

This is not an exhaustive list.

### **Characteristics of a Good Tender**

Before the key points of a good tender are explored it should be noted that a good tender does not mean that it will be a winning tender, only that it stands a greater chance of becoming one.

A typical good tender is:

1. Free of significant errors and / or omissions
2. Tailored to the exact requirements of the contract
3. Detailed with supporting evidence and additional documentation clearly referenced.
4. States what benefits they can bring to the Council
5. Demonstrates commitment to the Council
6. Shows you have put theory into practice
7. Clearly written and legible
8. Clearly committed to continuous improvement and best practice.
9. Clearly detailed in terms of possible variations and innovations (where applicable)
10. Inclusive of Added Value to the contract (where applicable)
11. Compiled in line with the instructions

### **Useful Checklist**

The following suggested points to remember are far from exhaustive but should hopefully stir up further points to ensure that your tender submission is the best it can be before you submit it for consideration for the contract. It should also be noted that the following list is a generic one and as such more complex or specialist tenders will almost certainly require a far greater list of requirements for checking, however the following should most certainly be included in every tender's final checks:

1. Have all the relevant aspects of the Councils requirements been discussed and evidence / support provided as to how it can be performed to the required standard?
2. Is everything standardised into the same font / type face and structure etc?
3. Is all the referenced supporting material and evidence included in a clearly set out appendix?
4. Has the entire document been double-checked and then further checked by a non-involved colleague for omissions / areas of confusion and clarity etc?
5. Has the document been signed in all the relevant places by the required level of personnel? (If the document requires a "Wet signature" in other words an original hand written signature then ensure it gets one. This is all too often overlooked and can mean the difference between being considered for the contract or not.)
6. Do you have a duplicate copy of the document available to you for safe keeping on file?

## Top Tips

1. When putting the tender together take it one stage at a time.
2. Always provide support and evidence for statements made in your tender.
3. Ensure the tender focuses on the requirements of set out in the specification and evaluation criteria.
4. Read the documentation clearly and understand what is required of you.
5. Provide all of the information requested. If you cannot provide some of the information, for whatever reason, ask for advice or as a minimum give a reason for not providing the information in your tender submission.
6. Where relevant, cross-reference the answers or responses in your tender to the questions in the invitation to tender. This will make it easier to evaluate.
7. Be clear on your pricing model and state any assumptions you have made when pricing (for example, resources required by you and/or the Council, timetables, etc.).
8. Read the questions carefully and answer them accurately and precisely.
9. Make sure you are aware of the objective of the contract – this will help focus your submission.
10. The Council can only evaluate what you have submitted. The Council cannot refer to any previous knowledge or experience it has had with a supplier unless it is in your submission – do not make any assumptions about what the Council may or may not know about your or your company.
11. Don't be put off by the tender documentation – you can always ask for help.
12. Don't include publicity material in your submission unless you have specifically been asked to.
13. You must complete and return the documents by the given time and date & make sure to sign anything that should be signed.
14. Make sure you return the documents in the format requested.

## **Glossary**

“Added Value” – Extra benefits brought to the Council as a result of using a particular supplier’s service.

“Company Structure and layout” – An alternative term for an organisational chart which shows how a company is staffed and its hierarchical structure.

“FOIA” – An acronym for the Freedom of Information Act 2000

“Freedom of Information Act 2000” – A retrospective law affecting all public bodies aimed at increasing the openness and accountability of their work by offering a general right of access to all information held by them.

“Invitation to Tender” If you’re successful with your PQQ and your financial standing, business probity and technical capability information is deemed superior to your competitors; you will be placed onto the shortlist for the contract. Each company on the shortlist will be invited to tender for the contract. For some smaller contracts the PQQ may not be required and all the process may begin with the ITT.

“Legibility” – How clear a document and its contents are to read

“Omissions” – Oversights or misunderstandings.

“Pre-Qualification Questionnaire” The PQQ is a questionnaire issued to ascertain the suitability of potential suppliers to provide goods, services or works as identified in the contract notice. It is likely to be the first stage in a two stage tendering process and you will be asked to provide details and evidence for company financial standing, business probity and technical capability.

“Weightings” – The importance of a selection / evaluation criteria in relation to the overall contract.

“Whole-life-costs” – The entire cost of a service or product from the initial identification of its requirement through its purchase and use, to its final disposal.