

## Tendering Tips

- Search out opportunities – register on the eTendersNI web portal or click on our “tender opportunities” link.
  - Don’t be afraid to ask us about the types of contracts we let and if there are any coming up soon. Often the most effective way to make contact is an initial email as our senior staff travel throughout Northern Ireland and are often out of their offices.
  - Market your goods and services – seek out don’t sit back! We publish our tender opportunities at midday every Friday, set a reminder in your diary for each Friday and check the eTendersNI portal. Remember this weekly check will cover all CoPEs and many Councils!
  - Don’t take on things you can’t do, be selective in the opportunities you bid for.
  - Prepare in advance for tenders – develop a library of “bid documents” that you are regularly asked for in order to cut down your time and work in responding to tenders. This might include organisation chart, accounts / financial statements, insurances etc.
  - Read tender documents carefully. If you don’t understand the requirement or something isn’t clear seek clarification from us. This can be done through the E-Sourcing NI portal using the secure messaging system.
  - Make sure that you understand the specification and in particular identify the mandatory requirements (these may appear as “shall”, “will” or “must”) if you can’t meet those requirements consider if it is worthwhile tendering – failure to meet a mandatory requirement will result in your tender being rejected.
  - Think about what the buyer wants. In your bid provide evidence that you can meet the buyers needs through your capability, capacity, experience etc. Make sure you show how your tender meets the specification and provide information in the format requested. Make sure you check and accept our terms and conditions of contract, for most tenders acceptance of our terms and conditions is a mandatory requirement.
  - In your tender submission make sure you follow the instructions, submit in the requested format and that all requested documentation or samples are provided as required by the tender documents. Ensure you complete the pricing information very carefully and double check you have made no mistakes.
  - Evaluation criteria and their weightings show the relative importance of each area of assessment, make sure you provide sufficient information to allow us to evaluate each criterion. Don’t submit general brochure information, tailor your bid to our requirements, avoid cutting and pasting as it can lead to silly errors. Be clear and concise as well as relevant and if possible get someone to review your submission before you send it.
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- Make sure your tender is with us on time. Tenders are returned electronically through the web portal do not leave it to the last minute to upload it into eTendersNI. The portal will close down the tender opportunity at the required closing date and time and you will not be allowed to complete your submission.

Understand the evaluation process - this generally follows 3 stages

1- Compliance checks – have you complied with the requirements in submitting your tender, these are typically mandatory checks and if you do not comply your tender will fail.

2- Selection – if there is a selection stage it is here that your company details completed in a questionnaire will be assessed to determine if your company is able to meet our contractual needs.

3 - Award – at this stage we will assess the product or service you are offering against a range of weighted criteria stated in our tender documents. Typically we will explain to you how these will be scored. Assessment at award stage is almost always based on Most Economically Advantageous Tender or MEAT.

- Don't forget to review your own performance following a tender whether it is successful or not learn from what you did well as well as what you did badly.
- Whether successful or unsuccessful you may find a debriefing following award of contract to be helpful. Do not be afraid to seek one out. We recognise that you need to learn and develop in order to become more competitive. We see this as to our benefit as well, as the more competitive you are the more likely we are to get an improved deal next time you tender. However at your debriefing remember you are representing your organisation and should conduct yourself accordingly.