

Digital Outcomes and Specialists 5

RM1043.7

Buyer FAQs

Customer guidance



Crown
Commercial
Service

Digital Outcomes and Specialists 5

Buyer FAQs

This document answers common questions raised by buyers. Section 1 covers general queries around using Digital Outcomes and Specialists (DOS). Section 2 covers the buying process. Section 3 covers the Digital Marketplace.

Section 1: General FAQs around DOS

Can I direct award on the DOS framework?

No, the buying process involves a two-stage further competition.

Is there a minimum term for a DOS call-off contract?

No, there is no minimum term for a DOS contract.

What's the maximum term for a DOS contract run for?

A contract on DOS can run for a maximum of 2 years with an optional extension of 25% of the original contract length. If you think you may need to use the extension option, this must be published upfront when you upload your requirement on the Digital Marketplace. It should also be clearly specified in the call-off order form with the chosen supplier.

Is there a minimum contract value on DOS?

No, there isn't a minimum contract value when you use DOS. However, it's important to remember that you must get budget approval before you start the buying process. If you're buying for central government, you have to go through the [digital and IT spend control process](#) before you publish your requirements on the Digital Marketplace. If you're buying for a public sector organisation outside of central government, you must get any internal approval you need.

Is there a maximum contract value on DOS 5?

No, there isn't a maximum contract value when you use DOS 5, but the framework agreement itself has an estimated total value of £2,000,000,000. It is important to remember that you must get budget approval before you start the buying process. If you're buying for central government, you have to go through the digital and IT spend control process before you publish your requirements on the Digital Marketplace. If you're buying for a public sector organisation outside of central government, you must get any internal approval you need.

Is pricing available?

Suppliers' specialist rates are available for Lot 2 on request by contacting the team on cloud_digital@crownccommercial.gov.uk

Does CCS credit check suppliers for their financial standing when they apply to join the DOS framework? And should those running the bidding process credit check winners of the bid?

No formal credit check is undertaken when suppliers join the framework.

As part of the framework application process suppliers self-assure themselves against a set of Declaration Questions. Any discrepancies are investigated by our compliance team.

Suppliers awarded a place on the framework are expected to maintain a minimum long term credit rating of 10 (Dun & Bradstreet). CCS monitors the credit rating of suppliers over the lifetime of the framework, and has the authority to suspend suppliers who fall below the expected standard.

Buyers should undertake their own financial due diligence before entering into a Call-Off Contract with the winning supplier. More details can be found in the [how to award a contract when you buy services](#) guidance.

Can I retain a supplier for multiple pieces of work under DOS?

No, the desired approach under DOS is to split large requirements into small chunks thereby offering opportunities to the maximum number of suppliers. The successful supplier cannot work outside the scope of your written requirements.

Retaining one supplier for new pieces of work would be against the framework rules and each procurement needs to be competitively tendered. The framework supports agile delivery methods - so buyers are encouraged to buy what they need when they need it and follow the agile stages of Discovery; Alpha; Beta; Live. However, if the original statement of work contained multiple elements these could be called down at the appropriate times.

Does the contract value include VAT?

No, VAT is not included in the DOS contract value.

Section 2: FAQs around the buying process?

What are the timescales for the DOS further competition process?

A DOS further competition process typically takes between 6-8 weeks, from start to finish. The steps are outlined in the process below:

1. Prepare your draft requirement - obtain approval from internal teams
2. Publish your requirements onto the Digital Marketplace(1 to 2 weeks live for Specialists/2 weeks live for Outcomes requirements) and answer supplier questions
3. Shortlist based on evidence (recommend 1 week for shortlisting) and invite shortlisted suppliers to further competition (1 week minimum request for proposal)
4. Evaluate assessment methods (evaluation/presentations; 2 weeks)
5. Award to chosen supplier (debrief and award approximately 2 weeks)

Please note this is a light guideline and that procurements can take longer depending on scope of requirements; internal governance procedures and availability of evaluators and moderators.

Can you provide me with an idea on how to run a Pre Tender Market Engagement?

Pre Tender Market Engagement (PTME) gives you the chance to engage the market before you publish your requirement. Whether you're clear on your requirements and what you need or are just starting and looking to get an idea of the market, you can get in touch with the suppliers on DOS to refine your requirements.

When it comes to running PTME if you don't have any draft requirements, you don't have to invite all suppliers. However, if you do have some draft requirements, then all suppliers will need to be invited. They can help inform the scope of what you want to do and the likely timescales and budget. When you publish your opportunity on the Digital Marketplace you can provide details of the PTME in the "Early market engagement" section.

For further information please check out our [Pre Tender Market Engagement guidance](#) document. If you require the contact details for the suppliers on the DOS framework, please contact us and we will be able to provide these for you.

How long is the shortlisting stage and when should we hold a Q&A session?

The guidance gives the period for shortlisting as 1-2 weeks but the period depends on the Lot used, it isn't adjustable. Outcomes (Lot 1) has an application period of 2 weeks, and Specialists (Lot 2) has an application period of 1 week or 2 weeks at the discretion of the buyer.

If suppliers are given 1 week to apply to a specialists requirement, the question and answer session must be in the first 2 working days after the opportunity is published. This will give suppliers time to review the additional information provided before applying.

Additional information can be found in our buyer guidance on [holding a session to answer supplier questions](#)

Do supplier applications need to come through the Digital Marketplace or can they be received via email?

When running a procurement on the Digital Outcomes and Specialists framework you can only accept supplier applications that are received from the digital marketplace. Even if the supplier is on the framework, if they applied to the opportunity using another method then the application will not be valid.

Supplier missed the application deadline because of a technical fault

If the supplier missed the deadline regardless of their reasons, then we'd advise against accepting their application.

This is due to the issues of how will the supplier send the application over, whether this will be compliant with the word count and them not appearing when you update the Digital Marketplace with the winning supplier. You could also risk being challenged by other suppliers who missed the deadline. Ultimately it is at your discretion, whether you choose to accept a shortlisting bid or not.

What happens if we have a group of suppliers who can meet our essential skills and nice-to-haves, exceed the number we chose to take through to evaluation?

If your shortlist is too long and you've used all the shortlist criteria, you should take all the top-scoring suppliers through to the evaluation stage. This is the only time you can exceed the number you set for evaluation. If only 1 or 2 suppliers meet your requirements, you can just evaluate those suppliers.

Do I issue feedback to unsuccessful suppliers through the Digital Marketplace?

No, notification of feedback or outcome of evaluation to suppliers is done outside of the Digital Marketplace and can be sent via email.

Further guidance is available through the Digital Marketplace on [how to notify shortlisted suppliers](#) and [awarding a contract and giving feedback to unsuccessful suppliers](#).

How long should I allow suppliers to prepare proposals once they have been shortlisted?

There are no prescribed timescales but as best practice, we suggest that it should not be less than 1 week. The buyer can fix a time limit which is sufficiently long to allow proposals to meet their requirements to be submitted, taking into account factors such as the complexity of the requirements and the time needed to send in proposals.

The proposal template restricts suppliers to a word count to 2000 words for their written proposal. Is this a word count we need to stick to or is there some flexibility available? Alternatively could we use our own template as long as it is in keeping with the essence of the framework requirements?

The proposal template is not mandatory to use or if you use it, you can tweak it according to your needs including increasing the number of words you will allow. You can also create your own that will suit your requirements and make it easier for you to evaluate the proposals.

I have received a written proposal where the supplier has gone over the word count. Should they be disqualified or given a chance to amend?

If the supplier has gone over the word count you set for your written proposal you can disregard the words which have gone over the limit.

For instance if your word count was 1000 words and the supplier submitted a response of 1200 words, you would not evaluate the information in those last 200 words.

Is there a requirement to have a standstill period when using DOS

There is no requirement to have a standstill period when using DOS, however this is ultimately down to your discretion. Best practice would suggest that you have one to protect both yourself and the supplier.

I have followed the buying process for DOS5 and awarded my call-off contract which has been completed and signed. Is there anything else I need to do?

You will need to publish your call-off contract to Contracts Finder and update the award details of the opportunity on Digital Marketplace.

Section 3: FAQs around the Digital Marketplace

Can I advertise an opportunity on the Digital Marketplace over 2 locations (i.e. North East and North West England)?

There is no capability on the Digital Marketplace for you to select multiple locations within your opportunity.

To advertise an opportunity in two locations, you can select the primary location in the "Location" section of the opportunity when writing your requirements. You can then include the second location in the "Address where the work will take place" section.

Can I advertise that we will look to shortlist 3-5 suppliers, rather than a set number?

It is not possible to select 3-5 suppliers to shortlist, the number that you state in the opportunity must match the number of suppliers that you take through to the shortlisting stage. We advise that you decide on a number of suppliers that works best for your procurement.

The only time a buyer will take through more suppliers to the shortlisting stage is if two or more suppliers are tied in their scores when being shortlisted.

How do I include an attachment to my requirements?

The Digital Marketplace does not allow attachments. If you wish to reference additional material or documents in your published opportunity you will need to host them on a server and make reference to the url in the appropriate text box. Where this is not possible buyers have been known to provide an external email address for suppliers to request documentation, which is issued outside of the Digital Marketplace.

How do I post the answers to the clarification questions on Digital Marketplace?

Please login to your Digital Marketplace account and select "Your Account" at the top of the banner.

Locate your published opportunity - you will find the option to answer supplier questions under "4. publish questions and answers"

Note, you will need to login using the email address you used to publish the opportunity.

Further guidance on [how to answer questions about your requirements](#) is also available.

As a buyer, am I able to contact the suppliers who didn't complete their application, to gather feedback on why they didn't apply?

No, we can't release this information as suppliers who didn't confirm an application would not be aware that they may be contacted, which would contravene our [privacy policy](#)

Contact details

If you have any other queries please email us at cloud_digital@crowcommercial.gov.uk or call our Customer Service Desk on 0345 410 2222

You can also learn more about Crown Commercial Service at:

Website:

crowcommercial.gov.uk

Twitter:

[@gov_procurement](https://twitter.com/gov_procurement)

LinkedIn:

[Crown Commercial Service](https://www.linkedin.com/company/crown-commercial-service)

