



Crown
Commercial
Service

Specification and Further Competition Guide

This guide has been designed to help you prepare to run a further competition under a Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework agreement.

The first step in a successful call-off agreement is to establish exactly what goods and/or service(s) you require from a supplier, and then communicate that requirement clearly in the form of a specification (also often referred to as a statement of requirement).

We also have a bid writing guide to help you when sending tender documents to suppliers.

What is a specification?

A specification is a statement of the requirements you need the supplier of the goods and/or services you are looking for to fulfil. It sits at the heart of the contract between you (as the customer) and the supplier. A clearly written specification is an invaluable tool, as it will help you get the right result for your organisation.

If you are running a further competition, any quality questions in the tender documents should be linked directly to your specification to ensure the questions you ask, and the supplier's responses, are relevant to the requirement.

Purpose of a specification

- Describes the characteristics of the goods and/or services that the supplier is expected to supply
- It is a contractual tool and an integral part of the call-off agreement / contract
- It will become legally binding for both your organisation and the supplier
- Enables potential suppliers to propose a solution that meets your requirement
- Supports contract management
- Can be referred to should any disputes arise between you and the supplier

Getting started

Avoid the temptation to simply copy an existing specification. Think about what went well with the existing arrangements, and what didn't go well.

Think about any new requirements, such as rate caps, or new innovations that may need to be considered.

Establish your high level requirements e.g. what do you want to achieve from the supplier, and how will you know that the requirement has been satisfied?

Think about recording risks and issues, and decide how these risks could be mitigated during the call-off process.

Key points to remember

- A good specification is an investment in time, which may save you money in the longer term
- Judgement and common sense are required
- If it is not specified it probably won't be provided, and it may not even be possible to request it at a later date (depending on the scope of the call-off agreement).

Drafting tips

- Use plain English and short sentences
- Think about your evaluation criteria and link your specification to it
- Arrange the content in a logical format
- Consider the main headings
- Consider sub-headings
- Include an explanation of defined terms in a glossary
- If you are not sure if something will be clear to the supplier, explain it. Don't assume they will know what you mean.

Things to consider

1. Are there things that are important to your organisation that require more detail than the framework agreement provides?
2. Is there an area which is particularly important to you, such as innovation?
3. Consider assurance of supply, quality, service, and continuous improvement / innovation.
4. How will you resolve complaints and issues?
5. Management information: what are the critical elements of the service; how will you ensure you are receiving the service you need and who will monitor that?

You need to be as objective and specific as possible when you define your standards, expectations, deliverables, and measurement criteria.

Contract management

What are the critical elements of the service; how will you ensure you are receiving the service you need and who will monitor that?

e.g.

- *The Contractor shall nominate a dedicated contract manager who will take overall responsibility for delivery under the contract.*
- *The Contractor shall attend quarterly meetings to review the performance of the contract.*

Training

Do you have any specific training requirements that suppliers should be aware of? For example, feel free to include job profiles for some of your most common vacancies as an appendix.

e.g.

- *In addition to the essential compliance checks we would require the supplier to be able to accommodate additional training requirements as part of a standard trust profile.*
- *An ability to offer specific “pre-employment testing” and online training would be advantageous.*

Service levels and key performance indicators

What needs measuring; where have you had performance issues before; how can you use the reporting data to monitor critical areas of the service and spot problems early?

e.g.

- *The Authority shall agree Key Performance Indicators with the successful Offeror prior to commencement of contract.*
- *Further Key Performance Indicators may be developed during the term of the Contract.*

The examples above are designed simply as a guide. If you require any further assistance writing your specification please email healthdo@crownccommercial.gov.uk