



Crown  
Commercial  
Service

# Office Supplies

## for the Wider Public Sector

### Frequently asked questions RM3703



# contents

<b>About Crown Commercial Service (CCS)</b> .....	03
Who are CCS? .....	03
What do CCS do? .....	03
Who on the category team can I contact? .....	03
What advice can they give?.....	03
<b>About the framework agreement</b> .....	04
What is a framework agreement?.....	04
Who can use the framework agreement? .....	04
What are the benefits of using the framework? .....	00
Who are the suppliers? .....	05
Can the Call Off agreement be amended? .....	05
<b>Accessing the agreement</b> .....	06
How long can a Call Off agreement be? .....	06
How do I use the eSourcing Suite? .....	06
How many suppliers should I invite to RFP?.....	07
Do I have to do a capability assessment? .....	07
What do I do if only one supplier responds to my further competition?.....	07
How much does it cost to access the agreement? .....	07
Do I always need to run a further competition?.....	07
How much notice period do I need to give suppliers when issuing a further competition? .....	07
What do I do if I have a problem with a supplier?.....	07
<b>About your requirement</b> .....	08
Is there any limit on the type of goods and services I can award under a Call Off agreement? .....	08
Can I run an eAuction through the framework agreement?.....	08
Do I have to use the framework Core List or can I use my own product list?.....	08
<b>Contact information</b> .....	09



# About CCS

## Who are CCS?

CCS is an executive agency of the Cabinet Office. Our overall priority is to provide an integrated commercial and procurement service for the UK public sector, delivering value for the nation through outstanding commercial capability and quality customer service.

## What do CCS do?

CCS' role in the relationship is to:

- Award agreements to successful suppliers
- Provide guidance to customers on using the frameworks
- Monitor overall customer satisfaction with suppliers' performance
- Assess the suppliers' on-going ability to meet customer requirements
- Collect and analyse Management Information from both suppliers and customers
- Provide regular updates to customers and suppliers, which may include news items, details of any contractual changes and Management Information

## Who on the category team can I contact?

If you have any questions relating to the RM3703 Office Supplies for the Wider Public Sector agreement please contact **Stuart Cameron** or **Clare Hough** in the CCS Office Supplies category team by emailing [officesupplies@crownccommercial.gov.uk](mailto:officesupplies@crownccommercial.gov.uk) or call our Help Desk on **0345 410 2222**.

## What advice can they give?

The CCS Office Supplies category team can help identify the most appropriate contractual route for your requirement and provide practical advice and guidance on how to access the agreement, but the ultimate decision rests with the customer.

In cases where there is high risk, uncertainty, or complexity, you are strongly advised to seek appropriate specialist legal and commercial advice from within your own organisation.



# About the framework agreement

## What is a framework agreement?

A framework agreement is a contractual vehicle that allows you to order goods and services under the terms and conditions specified in the framework agreement without having to go out to tender yourself. CCS enters into framework agreements with suppliers so that purchasers in the public sector may obtain value for money, whilst being assured that their procurement is compliant with UK and EU legislation.

CCS carries out procurements in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2006. Using framework agreements saves you time and money and ensures that the terms and conditions of the contract are robust and follow best practice.

## Who can use the framework agreement?

The RM3703 Office Supplies for the Wider Public Sector agreement can be accessed by any wider public sector organisation identified in the following OJEU Contract Notice:

<http://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:300237-2014:TEXT:EN:HTML&tabId=1>

and the Corrigendum linked to the Contract Notice:

<http://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:300064-2014:TEXT:EN:HTML&tabId=1>

The framework agreement will be in place for a maximum of 4 years in total. The initial contract period will be 2 years with the option for the Contracting Authority (CCS) to extend the period for up to two periods of a maximum of 2 years.

## What are the benefits of using the framework?

Procuring office supplies can be a costly and time consuming process. The RM3703 Office Supplies for the Wider Public Sector agreement provides the following benefits:

- Timescales and costs to customers are reduced through a more efficient procurement process
- The framework is compliant with the new EU procurement directives enacted as UK procurement regulations
- There is no need to re-draft and/or re-negotiate terms and conditions as these are agreed at framework level
- Customers are able to call off quickly against the framework for urgent requirements
- Customer satisfaction with suppliers' performance is monitored on an on-going basis by CCS and action is taken if required
- CCS negotiates competitive costs that are set at the time of initial competition
- CCS monitors and benchmarks supplier competitiveness at regular periods
- The eSourcing Suite provides an online tool to efficiently and effectively manage procurement. It provides access to online information, reducing the cost and time associated with producing and distributing hard copy information. This also allows for information to be constantly updated and easily accessed



### Who are the suppliers?

RM3703 Supplier
ACS Business Supplies Ltd
Banner Business Services Ltd
Commercial Ltd
Office Depot UK Ltd
OfficeTeam Ltd
XMA Ltd

### Can the Call Off agreement be amended?

Yes. The order form - which is set out as a template ready to populate is contained in the model Call Off agreement, available on our website. There is flexibility to supplement or refine the Call Off agreement with special terms.

Special terms provide scope for further tailoring where the Call Off agreement does not provide contractual cover for your requirements.

Under EU procurement rules, special terms must be used sparingly as a mechanism for supplementing or refining aspects of a Call Off agreement. They must not seek to redefine the underlying commercial parameters of the contractual relationship. You should always seek professional advice before considering the use of these terms.



# Accessing the agreement

## How long can a Call Off agreement be?

When determining an appropriate Call Off duration, you must take into account the nature of business to be awarded, the supplier's expectation for a suitable return on investment and any overall value for money considerations.

In general it is expected that a Call Off agreement should last no more than four years. It can extend after the duration of the framework agreement however customers are advised that they should only place agreements that are reasonable and appropriate in the market place. Best practice advice permits contracts lasting longer than the period of the agreement, provided that this is not used to distort competition or to avoid the application of the procurement regulations. It is for customers to determine what will give value for money, however taking into account the points above, an agreement lasting an excessive period of time may not prove to offer VFM for either party and the agreement should be fair and lawful.

If customers are in doubt about this guidance and the further competition process, please seek legal advice.

## How do I use the eSourcing Suite?

The eSourcing suite is an online system providing a wide range of eSourcing functionality for CCS, our customers and our suppliers. Within the eSourcing suite we have further competition templates which you can use to run a further competition project under one of our agreements. This functionality is available to all customers free of charge. There is a simple registration process to follow in order to access the site. The system offers enhanced functionality, reporting and provides an auditable approach to all aspects of the further competition process. Please refer to the eSourcing tool user guidance available here <https://gpsesourcing.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sso/jsp/login.jsp>

If you have any questions on how to use the eSourcing tool, please contact the eEnablement team on [eEnablement@crowncommercial.gov.uk](mailto:eEnablement@crowncommercial.gov.uk)

## How many suppliers should I invite to RFP?

To ensure compliance with current procurement regulations, customers must issue the RFP to ALL suppliers, unless suppliers have previously deselected themselves if you have previously conducted a capability assessment.



### **Do I have to do a capability assessment?**

Conducting a capability assessment is not compulsory. However, for more complex requirements, a capability assessment allows you to gauge the appetite for your specific project.

You may find it beneficial to conduct a capability assessment; this allows suppliers to indicate whether they are capable or not capable of meeting a customer's requirements at that particular time.

### **What do I do if only one supplier responds to my further competition?**

Provided you have given all suppliers the opportunity to participate in the competition, you may award directly to that supplier. Bear in mind however that the primary purpose of a competition is to achieve value for money and it is unlikely you will be sure that you are obtaining this if you encounter this situation.

CCS suppliers are obliged to respond to all further competitions under the terms of the framework agreement. You should inform CCS if a supplier will not respond to your further competition. CCS has remedies which include terminating the appointment of that supplier to the framework, if necessary.

To ensure you receive a greater response you can run a capability assessment, this will allow suppliers to discount themselves from bidding whilst it enables the supplier base to be warmed up to the impending competition. You can also contact suppliers directly to inform them there is an upcoming opportunity. It would also be appreciated if you could inform the CCS category team.

### **How much does it cost to access the agreement?**

There is no joining fee or charge for customers to access agreements via CCS.

### **Do I always need to run a further competition?**

Yes, you must invite all suppliers capable of meeting your requirement. This means holding a further competition with all capable suppliers.

### **How much notice period do I need to give suppliers when issuing a further competition?**

You must allow enough time for suppliers to respond to your further competition. A reasonable period would be 3 - 6 weeks but as an absolute minimum 3 weeks should be allowed from date of issue. Please consider the complexity of your requirement and the length of time suppliers will need to prepare a proposal when planning your timescales.

### **What do I do if I have a problem with a supplier?**

Under the Call Off agreement, each Contracting Body may, itself, resolve any disputes which it may have with a supplier.

If however you feel that the particular problem could be better dealt with having been escalated to CCS then you may refer this dispute to the dispute resolution process under the framework agreement. This has the advantage of dealing with problems that might affect a number of different Contracting Bodies.



# About your requirement

## Is there any limit on the type of goods and services I can award under a Call Off agreement?

You can only use the framework agreement to purchase goods and services that lie within the scope of the original OJEU contract notice.

This means that other kinds of 'office supplies' from the same framework providers, such as furniture, while they may be available from the suppliers should not be procured under this framework agreement or any Call Off agreement.

## Can I run an eAuction through the framework agreement?

To support customers to drive greater efficiencies in procuring office supplies, CCS intend to run a number of eAuctions to aggregate customer spend. Past office supplies eAuction successes show that customers have achieved in excess of 30% cost savings through product standardisation, product rationalisation and aggregating spend across multiple wider public sector organisations.

Wider public sector customers who would like to register their interest in an eAuction through this framework agreement can do so by emailing their contact details to [officesupplies@crownccommercial.gov.uk](mailto:officesupplies@crownccommercial.gov.uk) and a member of the team will contact you to discuss your potential eAuction requirements.

## Do I have to use the framework Core List or can I use my own product list?

Contracting Bodies may adopt the products detailed in the Core List (framework prices) which is the preferred option as this provides consistency and promotes a faster and more efficient competition as these products have already been coded and priced.

If the Core List does not exactly match a Contracting Body's specific requirement, then they can use the Core List to help create their own basket of goods and will form the basis of the Call Off agreement. Their own product list may differ in part to the Core List in this framework agreement and it may include Non-Core items.

Contracting Bodies should note that any prices submitted as part of their further competition or subsequently charged once your contract has been awarded, should not exceed the maximum prices quoted in the Core List for the RM3703 framework agreement. This can be found on our eSourcing tool or Government eMarketplace. If they do please contact the category team at [officesupplies@crownccommercial.gov.uk](mailto:officesupplies@crownccommercial.gov.uk)

# Contact information

## General enquiries

For further information about the Office Supplies agreement please contact:

**T:** 0345 410 2222

**W:** [www.gov.uk/ccs](http://www.gov.uk/ccs)

**E:** [officesupplies@crownccommercial.gov.uk](mailto:officesupplies@crownccommercial.gov.uk)



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