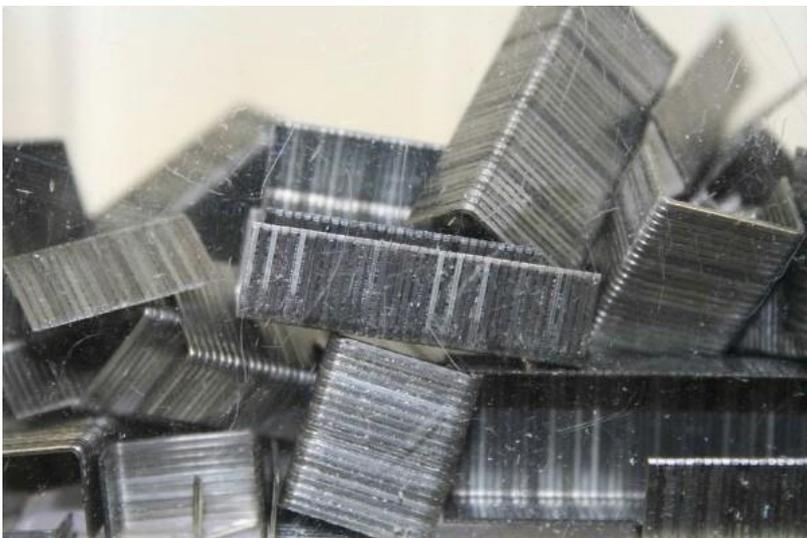




Crown
Commercial
Service

Office Supplies for the Wider Public Sector

customer guidance notes RM3703



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1 Key terms

To help you use this guidance document, listed below are a number of key terms which we use, and what they mean in the context of the Office Supplies for the Wider Public Sector framework agreement.

Standstill (Alcatel) period: is a period of at least ten calendar days between the notification of an award decision and the contract being signed with the successful supplier. Its purpose is to allow unsuccessful bidders to review the decision before the contract is signed; it is not mandatory at call off but it is recommended.

Authority: refers to CCS.

Call Off: means the legally binding agreement for the provision of services under the framework agreement terms and conditions (T&Cs), made between a Contracting Body and the supplier. This comprises a Letter of Appointment and the Call Off Terms which may include an Order Form, and is completed following a direct award or further competition. This can also be referred to as an order.

Capability assessment: allows suppliers to indicate whether they would like to be invited to participate in an upcoming further competition. It is an optional stage of the process. This is also commonly known as an RFI (Request for Information).

Clarification period: a defined period when bidders' questions can be answered.

Contracting Bodies: means the public sector bodies able to use this framework agreement.

Contracting Body: means you, the customer, in a contractual relationship with a framework supplier.

eSourcing tool: Our eSourcing tool enables you to run further competitions using templates to help reduce procurement lead times and commercial risk; and improve transparency and data quality. It is available to all customers free of charge. You simply need to register for access via our website. If you are already registered you will need to log in to run your further competition.

Framework agreement: this is the CCS framework agreement for Office Supplies for the Wider Public Sector (RM3703).

Direct Award: is the process undertaken for commodity purchasing where the Goods and/or Services can be met by the Framework Supplier's catalogue/description of the Goods and/or Services as set out in Framework Schedule 2 Schedule of Requirements.

Further Competition: is the process undertaken to establish which of the suppliers can offer the best value for your specific needs, by asking participating suppliers to respond to questions and bid prices. This is often referred to as ITQ (Invitation to Quote), ITT (Invitation to Tender), RFP (Request for Proposal), or RFQ (Request for Quote).

Specification of Requirements: either a document used during a further competition process to inform suppliers of what a Contracting Body's requirement entails or as per Framework Schedule 2 Schedule of Requirements.

Core List: are the products that are set out in Framework Schedule 2 Schedule of Requirements and are the maximum prices Contracting Bodies will pay through the framework agreement.



2 Introduction

CCS developed a public sector office supplies strategy designed to undertake a two phased approach, with the first phase being the RM3703 Office Supplies for the Wider Public Sector framework agreement to replace the RM781 framework which expired on 7 January 2015. This agreement is a one stop shop contractual vehicle that will provide the necessary choice and flexibility to meet the diverse needs of a wide customer base, whilst at the same time optimising savings opportunity with regular competition and benchmarking to ensure best value.

It is intended phase 2 which will follow in the last quarter of 2014/15 will be a strategic partnering relationship with a limited number of suppliers, providing a route for Central Government and wider public sector customers with a similar organisational and servicing profile to maximise strategic leverage within the marketplace.

This overall approach together with the Office Supplies Marketplace solution (hosted through the Government eMarketplace called Contracts Directory) which will launch in April 2015 will provide a full end to end service for your office supplies requirements.

We want to make the process of buying office supplies as easy for our customers as possible, so this guidance document will provide you with the information you need to use this agreement.

This guidance is not intended to provide specialised procurement, legal or other professional advice surrounding a particular procurement but to help you use the agreement. In cases where there is high risk, uncertainty or complexity, you are strongly advised to seek the advice from appropriate specialist procurement or legal personnel within your own organisation.

This guidance document will provide Contracting Bodies on the processes to follow when procuring office supplies under this agreement via a direct award or further competition procurement process.

These guidance notes will be updated on a regular basis and as such should be reviewed frequently.

This document is for guidance only and is not a contractual document.



3 The role of CCS

We will closely monitor supplier performance to ensure that your requirements are being met.

We have developed robust strategies, adopting the most appropriate route to market to maximise leverage across price, quality and time. We have a team of subject matter experts who can offer you best practice procurement advice. We work with our customers to ensure that Government policy and contractual obligations are adhered to.

As a public sector organisation, working on behalf of the public sector, we are playing a vital role helping to protect front line services by driving increased savings through our aggregated commercial procurement arrangements.

Supplier management includes three complementary and integrated service lines:

- **Supplier Relationship Management (SRM)**
 - Segmenting the supplier base and the way it is managed
- **Supplier Performance Management (SPM)**
 - Managing and improving supplier performance
- **Commercial Contract Management (CCM)**
 - In-life commercial management of contracts we have a dedicated supplier audit team which audits suppliers' systems to an agreed plan, giving you confidence that the prices you are charged are in line with the agreed rates.

We also work with all our suppliers to identify opportunities for greater efficiencies to achieve best quality and value for money, through regular benchmarking reviews and continuous improvement planning.

We work closely with senior stakeholders in organisations across the public sector, implementing policy to deliver savings and drive efficiency.

We want to ensure customer satisfaction, so we also act as an escalation point for all framework agreement related issues. You can refer any contractual or performance issues to us and we will work with both you and the supplier to resolve them.



4 Overview of the framework agreement

4.1 Scope of the framework agreement

The RM3703 Office Supplies for Wider Public Sector framework agreement provides you with a competitive, single route to market for the supply and delivery of all your office supplies requirements.

Office Stationery - General office stationery products such as pens, pencils, desktop accessories, filing, presentation items, diaries and associated office supplies including catering consumables.

Office Paper - Office paper products such as cut paper and board.

Janitorial Products - Janitorial cleaning products such as washroom supplies, blue roll, washing-up liquid and refuse sacks.

Small Office Machines - Small office machines such as desktop printers, paper shredding machines, label making machines and laminators.

Personal Protection Equipment - Personal Protection Equipment such as safety clothing, hard hats, first aid kits and eye protectors.

Electronic Office Supplies - Electronic office supplies such as ink and toner printer cartridges, electronic storage media and peripherals.

Suppliers who have been awarded a framework agreement:

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

4.2 Framework agreement duration

This framework agreement commenced on 05 March 2015 and will expire on the 04 March 2017 with the option to extend for up to two 12 month periods (maximum 24 months).



4.3 Benefits

This agreement will provide a range of commercial benefits including:

- **Quality** - we have carried out a rigorous competitive tender, testing suppliers to ensure that the best quality of service will be provided to our customers
- **Value for money** - with more public sector bodies using the agreement, the resulting combined spend will drive better value for money and cashable savings for all of the public sector – so taxpayers' money is being put to best use
- **Improved supplier performance** - strategic relationships with key suppliers to the public sector to gain better value for money, reduce cost, improve performance and align suppliers with government / organisational priorities
- **EU compliance** - the agreement is fully compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2006
- **Reduced procurement cycle times** - the use of standard process templates and eProcurement tools reduces timescales and promotes consistency through 'Lean' processes
- **Improving efficiency** - duplication of effort and time taken within the tendering process (for customers and suppliers) is minimised, freeing up resource so you can focus on other key activities within your organisation
- **Reduced commercial risk** - the use of standard terms and conditions minimises commercial risk through robust management of terms and conditions and standardisation

Features

This agreement will provide a range of commercial features including:

- Multi-vendor agreement with one lot structure
- Ability to segment requirements and target specific customer needs
- Three different routes to procure office supplies i.e. direct award, further competition and/or eAuction
- WPS focused product list from detailed customer product level MI
- Scope to aggregate requirements through further competition and/or eAuction to deliver efficiency savings
- Reduced core list pricing through eAuction and further competition which delivers proven customer price savings
- Range of delivery options ensuring full visibility of service costs
- Flexibility in price and service requirements to suit individual requirements
- A full range of sustainable products that meet the Government Buying Standards and is in line with the Greening Government Commitment

4.4 Who can access the agreement

This agreement is open for use by all UK wider public sector bodies (and any future successors to these organisations) as detailed in the 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>



5 How to use the agreement (Direct Award)

The Direct Award process is ideally suited to commodity purchasing where the Goods and Services can be met by the framework supplier's catalogue/description of the Goods and Services as set out in Framework Schedule 2 Schedule of Requirements.

This procedure can be used in the following circumstances:

- the Contracting Body determines that:
 - there is only one supplier capable of meeting their particular requirement

or

- on the basis of the information available to the Contracting Body, they can determine which supplier's offering provides the most economically advantageous solution

and

- and all of the terms of the proposed Call Off agreement are laid down in this framework agreement and the Call Off Terms do not require amendment or any supplementary terms and conditions (other than the inclusion of optional provisions already provided for in the Template Call Off Terms).

5.1 How to Direct Award

Any Contracting Body awarding a Call Off agreement under this framework agreement without holding a further competition shall:

5.1.1 develop a clear Specification of Requirements;

5.1.2 apply the Direct Award criteria set out below to the catalogue of the Goods and Services for all suppliers capable of meeting the Specification of Requirements in order to establish which of the framework suppliers provides the most economically advantageous solution; and

5.1.3 on the basis set out above, award the Call Off agreement with the successful framework supplier in accordance with paragraph 5.2 below.

Evaluation Criteria	Criteria Weighting Range %
Quality	40% (the Contracting Body can modify the variance level to meet their requirements i.e. +/- 10%)
Prices and Charging Structure	60% (the Contracting Body can modify the variance level to meet their requirements i.e. +/- 10%)



5.2 Call Off / Direct Award procedure

5.2.1 Subject to paragraph 5.1 above, a Contracting Body may Direct Award by awarding a Call Off agreement with the supplier by sending (including electronically) a signed order form substantially in the form (as may be amended or refined by the Contracting Body) of the template order form which can be found in Framework Schedule 4 – Model Call Off Agreement. The parties agree that any document or communication (including any document or communication in the apparent form of a Call Off agreement) which is not as described in this paragraph shall not constitute a Call Off agreement under this framework agreement.

5.2.2 On receipt of an order form as described in 5.2.1 above from a Contracting Body the supplier shall accept the Call Off agreement by promptly signing and returning (including by electronic means) a copy of the order form to the Contracting Body concerned.

5.2.3 On receipt of the signed order form from the supplier, the Contracting Body shall send (including by electronic means) a written notice of receipt to the supplier within two (2) working days and a Call Off agreement shall be formed.

Note:

You must ensure that you quote the framework agreement reference number RM3703 in any correspondence you have with the suppliers as this will ensure the suppliers give you the correct prices, and confirm you are covered by the RM3703 terms and conditions



5.3 Framework prices (Core List)

5.3.1 The framework prices available through Direct Award are the maximum prices Contracting Bodies will pay through the framework agreement. Prices are based on the following standard service profile:

- Next Day Delivery to a single point, to potentially any location in the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (including Scilly Isles and Scottish Islands);
- Provision of online electronic catalogue, as required;
- Full or partial electronic ordering and payment system that can support Punch-Out and provide "purchase to pay" functionality, as required;
- Provision of management information, as required;
- Contract management, as required;
- Returns for faulty goods;
- Returns for goods ordered in error;
- No minimum order level.

5.3.2 If Contracting Bodies office supplies requirement do not mirror this service profile or the core list for the framework does not capture the majority of your office supplies usage, then a further competition should be considered in order to achieve the most economically advantageous solution.

5.3.3 We recognise from time to time that other product lines may be required; to allow for such events the suppliers have provided pre-agreed discount levels from their wider catalogue and forms the basis of the Non-Core List. Specialist items which are not available on suppliers catalogues and only available by specialist order will be priced on a cost-plus basis. Suppliers have provided a cost- plus percentage (%) value they deem appropriate for specialist items.

5.3.4 Suppliers are contractually obliged to perform to a set of key service levels. A list of these service levels are detailed in Appendix 1.

5.4 Pack sizes

Suppliers were asked to pro-rata their prices based on a 'virtual' pack size set by CCS within the original Invitation to Tender (ITT). Contracting Bodies should be aware that products detailed in the Core List on the Government eMarketplace cannot be directly evaluated as all suppliers products are shown in their actual pack sizes and unit prices, so may differ on like for like products. If Contracting Bodies require access to the original prices as submitted as part of the ITT process which include their pro-rata prices and 'virtual' pack sizes, then this can be located by logging into the eSourcing tool.



5.6 Government eMarketplace

The Government eMarketplace provides access to the full range of products available through the RM3703 framework agreement. Contracting Bodies have a number of options to access pricing via the Government eMarketplace:

- **Search by Product** – The ‘Search by Product Tool’ provides step-by-step product selection to narrow your choice by product feature, the tool can be accessed through the following web link:

<https://buyers.procserveonline.com/otis/login.html>

- **Search by Supplier** – You can also search by supplier to access pricing for each supplier by using the search facility through the following web link:

<https://buyers.procserveonline.com/otis/login.html>

Contracting Bodies should note that because this agreement is open to any wider public sector organisation, the RM3703 supplier catalogues on the Government eMarketplace are not restricted so you should ensure that you are searching and viewing products under the correct agreement otherwise you will not be covered by the RM3703 terms and conditions.



Note:

Full details on all suppliers framework prices and pre-agreed percentage discount levels from their wider catalogue can be found on the CCS eSourcing tool by registering on <https://gpsesourcing.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sso/jsp/login.jsp> or on the Government eMarketplace <https://buyers.procserveonline.com/otis/login.html>



6 How to use the agreement

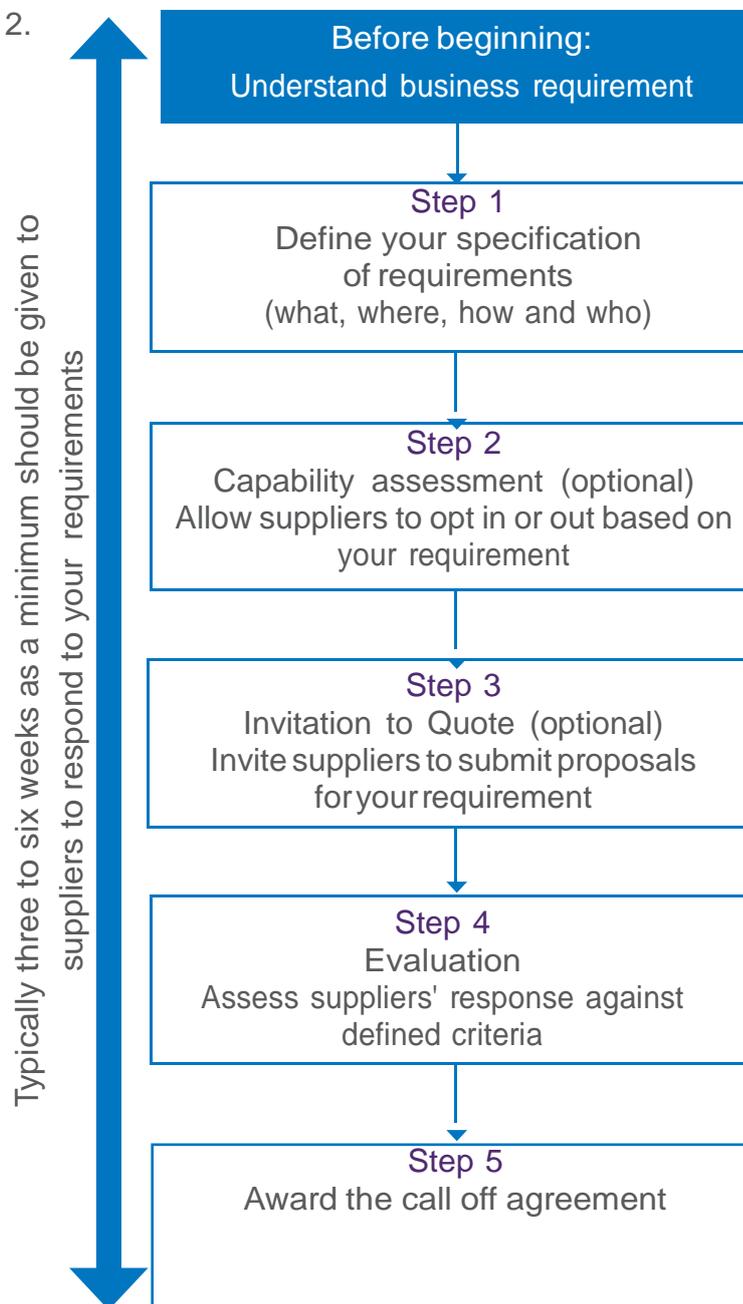
(Further Competition)

These guidelines are intended to be a general statement of best practice. It is appreciated that some of the recommendations are sometimes not easily employed but the Contracting Body should always try to generate fair competition when writing their Specification of Requirements.

The Call Off for a Further Competition process

The flow diagram below (Fig 2.) sets out the further competition process for using the Office Supplies for the Wider Public Sector agreement (RM3703).

Fig 2.





7 Step 1: Develop Specification of Requirements / Call Off

The Specification of Requirements sets out a full and accurate statement of what is required and forms part of the documentation that is sent out to all suppliers when inviting them to quote.

The Specification of Requirements has three main aims:

- To communicate to potential suppliers what you require
- To provide a clear and transparent evaluation criteria for proposals to be measured against.
- Ensure that open competition is achieved. A good specification should include a clear and concise description of what is required and highlight features that are essential. When developing the Specification of Requirements, the following areas should be considered and included within the final document:
 - a. Statement of business requirements including service profile
 - b. Pricing/cost model information
 - c. Competition timescales
 - d. Evaluation criteria and weightings
 - e. Evaluation Process
 - f. Completing the draft Order Form including special terms and conditions

Further information on each of these elements is provided below.

a. Statement of business requirements

Before beginning the further competition procedure Contracting Bodies should have a clear and concise description of the products and services that they wish to purchase i.e. how they want the goods to be delivered. Developing a comprehensive statement of business requirements at the outset of the process is essential to ensuring overall success in the procurement.

Contracting Bodies should ideally include as much information regarding their service profile to ensure all suppliers understand the requirement clearly and are in the best possible position to receive the most competitive proposal from suppliers. Below are some examples of what should be included. If this information is not held by the Contracting Body, then this should be requested from your current office supplies provider before commencing the further competition:

- Delivery information e.g. number and frequency of deliveries per week, location of deliveries required i.e. address of each site or at least the postcode;
- Estimated contract value for office supplies per annum
- Indicative product usage/volumes bought over last 12 months
- Core v Non-Core product split
- Ordering and payment information
- Minimum order level



b. Pricing / cost model

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@crowncommercial.gov.uk

Any other product lines purchased outside of a Contracting Body's own specific product list which has not already been captured as part of their Order Form or Call Off agreement, suppliers will apply the framework non-core discount levels from their wider catalogue or cost-plus percentage if those lines are deemed as specialist items.

Contracting Bodies should ensure they build into their Order Form or Call Off agreement the most appropriate price review mechanism to suit their individual needs and design a pricing schedule that best fits the cost structure of the overall requirement, in line with the service profile information listed in a) statement of business requirements. The pricing

schedule should allow ease of price evaluation in an open and transparent way.

Suppliers were asked to pro-rata their prices based on a 'virtual' pack size set by CCS within the original Invitation to Tender (ITT). Contracting Bodies should be aware that products detailed in the Core List on the Government eMarketplace cannot be directly evaluated as all suppliers products are shown in their actual pack sizes and unit prices, so may differ on like for like products. If Contracting Bodies require access to the original prices as submitted as part of the ITT process which include their pro-rata prices and 'virtual' pack sizes, then this can be located by logging into the eSourcing tool.

Suppliers are contractually obliged to perform to a set of key service levels. A list of these service levels are detailed in Appendix 1.

c. Further Competition timescales

Further Competition timescales from Contracting Bodies must allow sufficient time for suppliers to respond to the Invitation to Quote (ITQ) or Request for Proposal (RFP). 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.

The timing should allow for a clarification period, where suppliers can ask questions relating to the RFP. These timescales should be clearly set out within the Specification of Requirements.



The table below is an example of the stages for which outline timescales should be provided to suppliers:

RFP published	Insert date
Clarification question and answer period	Insert start date – insert end date
RFP response deadline	Insert date
Evaluation	Insert start date – insert end date
Suppliers notified of outcome	Insert date
Contract awarded (after standstill period)	Insert date

Note:

In order to support a fair and transparent process all questions and answers during the clarification period should be recorded and must be shared with ALL bidding suppliers in a written format. It is not advised to hold individual meetings with suppliers once the procurement process has begun; this increases the risk of disadvantaging suppliers as the process is no longer transparent or equal.

d. Evaluation criteria and weightings

The Contracting Body may at its discretion, award a Further Competition on the basis of the offer which:

- Offers the lowest price;
- Is the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT)

If the Contracting Body wants to award a Further Competition on lowest price, all suppliers should be treated equally, meaning quality should not play a part in the award criteria, only based on lowest price.

All suppliers on this framework agreement have already been evaluated based upon Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) criteria at a high level. This took account of suppliers' scores for both quality and price. Therefore if Contracting Bodies intend to award a Further Competition on the basis on MEAT, then the evaluation should concentrate on the supplier's ability to best meet your specific requirements (quality) and pricing/cost model. The evaluation weightings should also be issued upfront.



You should bear in mind that the supplier's circumstances may have changed since the award of the framework agreement. Contracting Bodies should therefore ask each supplier if there have been any material changes since they submitted their tender under the framework agreement.

Questions such as financial standing, business continuity and previous experience have already been evaluated at framework agreement level and therefore should not be re-assessed.

Below is the high level and sub-level evaluation award weightings taken from the framework agreement. When developing the Call Off evaluation criteria, Contracting Bodies shall apply the following high level evaluation criteria and weightings to their Further Competition. This list is not exhaustive and Contracting Bodies should determine their own sub-criteria and respective weightings prior to inviting proposals in respect of their Further Competition.

Evaluation Criteria	Criteria Weighting (%)	Evaluation Sub-Criteria
Quality	40% (the Contracting Body can modify the variance level to meet their requirements i.e. +/- 10%)	Environmental Considerations
		Selection, Appointment and Management of Sub-Contractors
		Continuity and Assurance of Supply
		Security
		Service Levels and KPIs
		Ordering Methods
		Delivery Service Levels
Prices and Charging Structure	60% (the Contracting Body can modify the variance level to meet their requirements i.e. +/- 10%)	Core List
	Total = 100%	



You must identify your quality criteria for the evaluation; think about the key quality criteria you want to assess and apportion it the highest weighting. It is up to you to decide the overall criteria using the high level ranges provided above however the total percentage of quality and price must be 100%.

You may wish to seek your own internal procurement, communications, or legal advice when selecting the overall criteria and percentage weightings between quality and price. Remember the overall weightings must be within the ranges in the box above.

The questions you require suppliers to respond to should also be determined at this stage, although they do not need to be included within the Specification of Requirements document. They should be issued as part of the Invitation to Quote or Request for Proposal. All questions should be forward looking and not based on previous experience (e.g. “how would you deliver...” instead of “how have you delivered...”) and must allow for an objective assessment.

Note:

Consider whether the quality criteria you are setting needs to be tested at this stage – has it already been tested by CCS, or is it something that CCS monitors as part of supplier management (such as financial standing)?

You must also describe how the price / cost model assessment will be conducted. For example, you may wish to award the full price weighting to the lowest-priced provider and the subsequent bids could receive a decreased score based on the differential in their pricing responses. It is up to Contracting Bodies to determine how the price assessment will be conducted but it must be made clear to suppliers in the RFP documentation.



e. Evaluation Process

In preparation of the evaluation stage, you should document the process you intend to follow (i.e. who will undertake the evaluation, when this will be carried out, how the ultimate decision to award a Call Off agreement will be made). This will ensure there is a robust audit trail in place, helping to secure fairness and transparency and reducing the risk of challenge.

The evaluation procedure must be defined prior to the issue of the RFP and should include a documented record of:

1. The criteria against which you will assess the responses.
2. The scores that you will apply to assess how far compliance with each criteria has been achieved.
3. Where appropriate, the weighting methodology which will ensure there is a balance in overall scores that reflects the relative importance of each criteria you are using.
4. The overall basis for determining (based on the criteria, scores and weighting) which supplier response is the most economically advantageous offering. Normally this is the response with the highest overall mark.
5. An indicative timetable for each stage in the Further Competition process.

It is important to ensure that at all stages of the process you can demonstrate it is being conducted in a fair and transparent manner to all suppliers.

f. Completing the draft Order Form including special terms and conditions

The Order Form which is set out as a template in Framework Schedule 4 of the Model Call Off agreement, and accompanies the Call-Off agreement, identifies the terms and conditions and will form the basis of your Call Off agreement that will be awarded to the successful supplier.

Contracting Bodies may include special terms and conditions to their Call Off contract. Special terms may be used to clarify, supplement or refine the existing terms. The application of special terms is subject to the following:

- Special terms may be proposed only by the Contracting Body
- Agreement to special terms may be sought only under the Further Competition procedure and only used to supplement or refine aspects of the Call Off agreement
- Special terms must not be used to substantially alter the framework terms and conditions
- Special terms must be notified in advance to all suppliers involved in the RFP

Contracting Bodies should also be aware that any additional special terms could lead to increased costs and lengthen the timescale for the Further Competition, as suppliers will need to assess the implications of the changes and may undertake some risk analysis. You must not seek to redefine the underlying commercial parameters of the contractual relationship. Any attempt to do this will risk breaching the procurement rules and expose you to risk of legal challenge. You should always seek professional advice before considering the use of special terms.



8 Step 2: Capability Assessment

(optional)

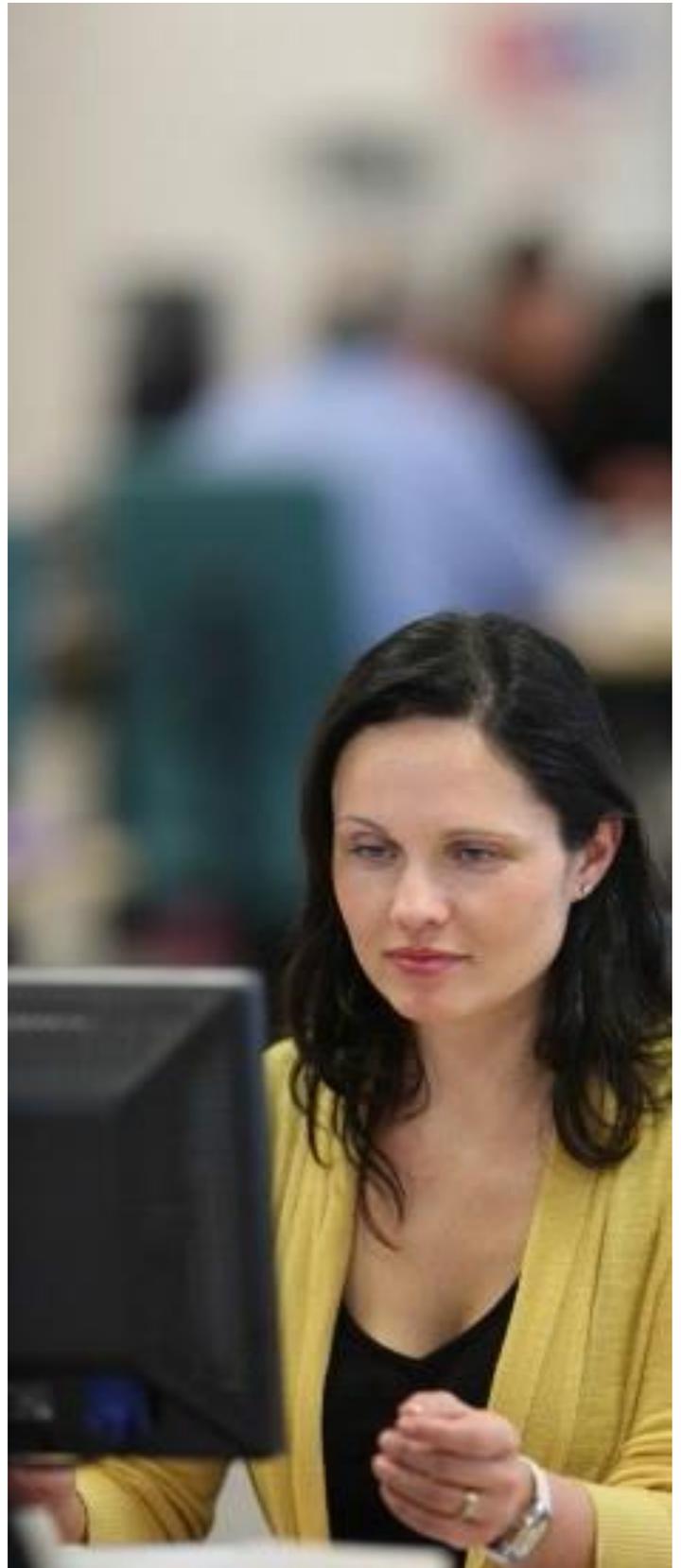
A capability assessment allows you to gauge the appetite for your Further Competition, particularly for more complex requirements, and assess whether you have allowed sufficient timing for suppliers to respond.

To comply with current procurement regulations you must invite all suppliers awarded a framework agreement to respond; however, you may find it beneficial to conduct a capability assessment first.

By completing a capability assessment you should quote the framework agreement reference number RM3703, provide a concise summary of the requirements and the timescales for the procurement with all suppliers. By doing this, you will be able to ensure that suppliers:

- understand the requirement
- agree that what you are asking for is achievable
- are aware of price expectations
- understand the timescales involved and the necessary resource
- can make an informed decision on whether or not to opt out of the opportunity

The capability assessment can be conducted via our eSourcing tool. For information on how to do this, please refer to the user guidance here <https://gpsesourcing.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sso/jsp/login.jsp> Following the capability assessment you must invite all suppliers who have not opted out to respond to the competition.





9 Step 3: Invitation to Quote (RFP)

Having followed steps 1 and 2 you will now have all documentation ready to issue an RFP.

In order to assess which supplier(s) should be awarded Call Off contract(s), you will issue an RFP to instigate the formal competitive stage of the Further Competition procedure.

To ensure compliance with current procurement regulations, customers must issue the RFP to ALL capable suppliers on the framework agreement, unless suppliers have previously deselected themselves at the capability assessment stage (where this stage has been used).

Details of the procurement process, timeline, award criteria and evaluation procedure must be published to all capable suppliers at the same time the RFP is published.

The RFP will ask suppliers to provide a response in which they demonstrate how they intend to meet your requirements as set out in the statement of requirements. Subsequently you will use this information to evaluate which supplier has the most advantageous offering and should therefore be awarded a Call Off agreement.

During the clarification period, suppliers may wish to enter into some form of dialogue with you regarding the content of their response. Any such dialogue must be managed carefully on a non-discriminatory basis.

Clarifications may be held in relation to quality/price evaluation, performance issues or general aspects of the requirement. It is possible that clarifications may lead to an adjustment to particular RFP timescales, aspects of service performance and/or products/pack sizes contained within your cost model / pricing template as an example. However any adjustments must be tightly controlled so that they do not affect fairness of the overall competition.

You must anonymise any questions received, making sure that you do not reveal the identity of the originator, or reveal any potentially commercially sensitive information relating to the originator. You must provide an appropriate response and issue both the question and answer to all participating suppliers, releasing this information to all suppliers at the same time, thus insuring fairness and transparency.

Note:

The Further Competition ordering procedure must not be used to establish a 'mini framework arrangement' that sits beneath the overarching RM3703 Office Supplies framework agreement (i.e. you may not use a further competition to set up a shortlist of appointed suppliers who you might then approach directly for ad hoc requirements).

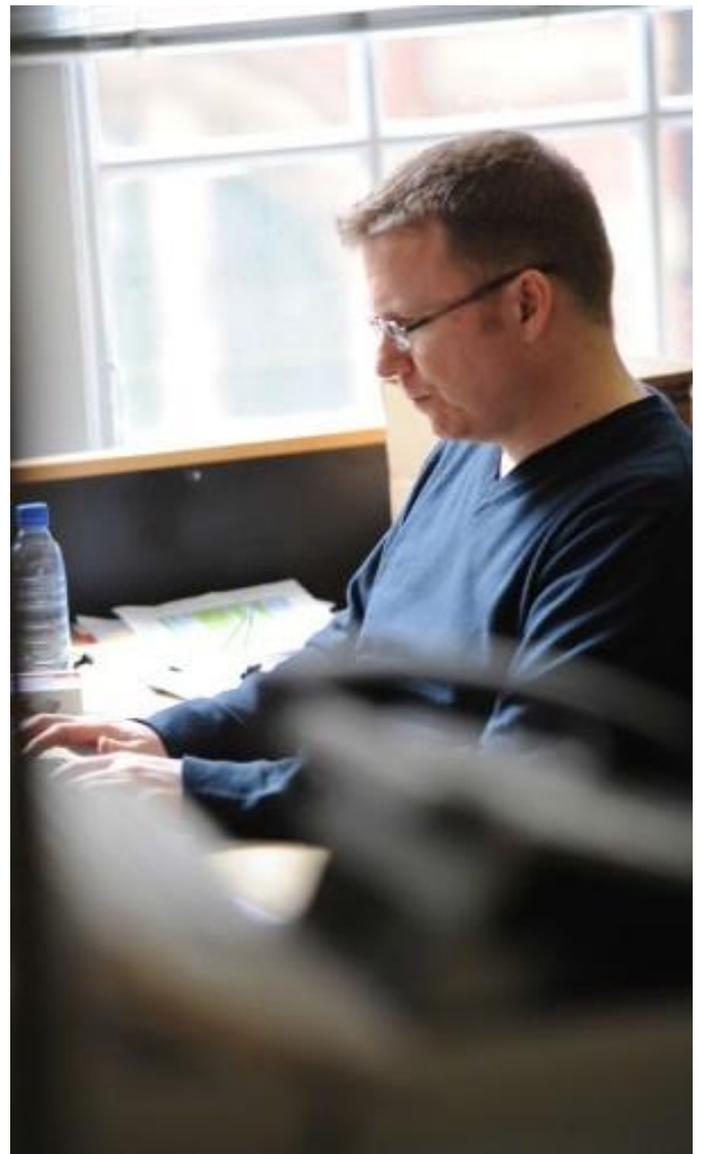


You should allow a reasonable amount of time for proposals to be submitted. Contracting Bodies can determine their own timescales and deadlines within their Further Competition (see step 1c: Further Competition timescales). Proposals must remain confidential until the response deadline has expired.

The RFP can be published and suppliers invited to tender via the CCS eSourcing tool or you can use your own eProcurement or eTendering tool. The eSourcing tool is designed to give an auditable approach to this formal stage of the Further Competition process. It enables you to:

- Respond to supplier clarification questions
- Track bid responses
- Send reminders to bidders
- Communicate to successful and unsuccessful suppliers
- Provide feedback to all parties

For information on how to do this, please refer to the eSourcing tool user guidance available here <https://gpsesourcing.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sso/jsp/login.jsp>





10 Step 4: Evaluation

After the closing date you will need to evaluate each compliant supplier response in accordance with the evaluation criteria and procedure that was published in the RFP documentation.

Evaluation procedures should be carried out in accordance with EU procurement principles, to allow the strengths, weaknesses and characteristics of each response to be considered in a fair and objective manner. All information provided by suppliers in their responses must be kept in a secure, locked place, with access strictly controlled and monitored.

It is recommended that at a minimum, a team of three evaluators should review the responses to support a fair consensus. Responses should not be discussed outside of the evaluation team and pricing information should be treated as commercially sensitive.

You must ensure that you maintain a fully documented audit trail of the results and final award decision, which will be useful for providing feedback to unsuccessful suppliers.

If a supplier indicates that a material change in its circumstances has taken place since the original framework agreement evaluation, then this may signal that they are no longer fit to participate for your particular procurement. In these circumstances the evaluation board will need to carefully consider whether to exclude the supplier from the procurement process, or to continue, provided that any risks can be mitigated. CCS should be notified of any such instances.

During the clarification period, if an adjustment is likely to have an impact on the ability of suppliers to provide a timely response to the Further Competition, you should consider extending the relevant deadline for responses. You should not allow adjustments to be made which could have the effect of distorting competition (e.g. by allowing a particular supplier to propose a fundamentally different approach which cannot be evaluated equally with other suppliers).

You should provide a clear explanation as to how clarifications will be managed. This should be mirrored in the evaluation process document (see step 1e: Evaluation Process).



11 Step 5: Award

Following completion of the evaluation process and seeking any required internal approval you can now notify all participating suppliers of the outcome of the RFP.

You should provide written feedback to all participating suppliers including a full break down of their scores against the stated evaluation criteria.

You should consider allowing a standstill period (of 10 days) before awarding the agreement; this will allow the participating suppliers the opportunity to request further feedback where necessary.

If you have issued your RFP via our eSourcing tool you can use the system to issue this feedback and manage any clarification questions.

The process of physically concluding the Call Off agreement is simple, where the Contracting Body and the successful supplier both sign the completed Order Form and Call Off agreement. Before execution, Contracting Bodies should ensure all necessary schedules, plans and referenced documents including applicable sections are complete with the appropriate content.

You should ensure there is a documented audit trail of the results and final award decision.

You can now award a call off contract to the successful supplier.

PLEASE ACTION - Following the award of any Call Off agreement (Further Competition) it is mandatory for Contracting Bodies to notify the Contracting Authority the following details by emailing officesupplies@crownccommercial.gov.uk

- Who was awarded the Further Competition
- Contract start and end dates (including extension options)
- Estimated Contract Value for Office Supplies
- Indicative savings achieved



12 Step 6: Placing an order

The RM3703 framework agreement includes a standard set of Call Off terms and conditions, which is the contract under which you will order goods and services from the suppliers. It is this contract that sets out the legal relationship between you (the Contracting Body) and the supplier.

Once the procurement process has been concluded, both the Contracting Body and the successful supplier should sign the completed Order Form and Call Off agreement to confirm that both parties have accepted the content and terms of that Call Off. You must retain this signed copy of the contract for your records.





13 HP Supplies Big Deal programme

RM3703 Office Supplies for the Wider Public Sector Supplies Big Deal (SBD) programme

Direct Award

CCS has negotiated a SBD programme with Hewlett Packard (HP) which covers the RM3703 Office Supplies framework. This SBD is for all Contracting Bodies who wish to purchase HP Electronic Office Supplies (EOS) products from the framework agreement. This SBD has been agreed for a 12 period month from the commencement date of the agreement for those Contracting Bodies buying ink or toner items on a Direct Award basis and will be reviewed annually. Prices contained in the Core List on the eSourcing tool and Government eMarketplace are inclusive of the additional SBD discounts agreed with HP.

Further Competition

For Contracting Bodies running a Further Competition, the suppliers on this framework agreement will typically include the SBD in their RFP pricing responses for any HP Electronic Office Supplies (EOS) products, where applicable. Once you have awarded your Call Off agreement and commenced trading with your appointed supplier, they will claim the relevant discounts back against the CCS SBD for the appropriate HP products.





14 Contract Management

Once the supplier has started to provide the goods and services, you should work with the supplier to ensure they are performing to meet your requirements. CCS can be used as an escalation point for support if the supplier is continually underperforming.

As part of our contract management process, CCS has the right to conduct independent auditing of any supplier's processes, procedures and application of their prices. You should contact us if you feel that a particular supplier should be audited as part of this process.





Appendix 1: Service Levels

Service Levels / Performance Criteria	Service Level Performance Measure
Service Level Performance Criterion for Quantitative Data	
Incoming telephone queries and orders from a Contracting Body to the Supplier are answered within 8 seconds	at least 98.5%
Each Direct Purchase Order and Further Competition Purchase Order is acknowledged within 24 hours of being placed	100%
Ordered Goods delivered within the applicable delivery time	at least 99%
Ordered Goods delivered complete at the first attempt	at least 98%
Replacement Ordered Goods delivered within the agreed timescale	at least 99%
Direct Purchase Order and Further Competition Purchase Order invoices presented on time	at least 99%
Management Information submitted on time	100%
Service Level Performance Criterion Qualitative Data	
Ordered Goods returned due to failure to conform to quality standards	not more than 3%
Returns or refunds due to Supplier picking incorrect goods	not more than 2%
Response to any Order Form / RFx within the notified timescale in the further competition	100%
First response to Contracting Bodies complaint (receipt of complaint) within agreed timescales	at least 99%
Reliability of systems relating to the performance of obligations pursuant to the Framework Agreement and Call Off Agreement over the last 12 months including on-line, email, website and phone/fax	at least 98%



Contact information

General enquiries

For further information about the Office Supplies agreement please contact:

T: 0345 410 2222

W: www.gov.uk/ccs

E: officesupplies@crowcommercial.gov.uk



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[Crown Commercial Service](#)

Liverpool 9th Floor
Capital Building
Old Hall Street
Liverpool L3 9PP

London
Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

Newport
ConceptHouse
Cardiff Road
Newport NP10 8QQ

Norwich
Rosebery Court
St Andrews Business Park
Norwich NR7 0HS



