

Courier Services Framework Agreement (RM3798)

Contracting Body: Frequently Asked Questions





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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1. How do I access the framework pricing schedules?

All public sector bodies who intend to view the framework prices are required to complete a Customer Access Agreement (CAA) that is specific to the framework agreement that they wish to call off.

The CAA does not commit you to using RM3798 as a route to market but it requires you to acknowledge that any price schedules shared are treated as “commercial in confidence” and provide assurance that you will not share these outside of your organisation.

The CAA can be downloaded from the documents section of the framework webpage.

Once your CAA has been signed and completed, please return by email to:

info@crowncommercial.gov.uk, or to

postal.services@ypo.co.uk

Price schedules will be sent via email from the team at CCS or YPO.

2. What is the duration of the framework agreement?

The RM3798 Courier Services Agreement has been awarded for a term of 3 years with an option to extend for an additional 12 months.

3. What is the maximum term that I can award a call off agreement for?

This is down to customer discretion, but CCS recommend that no call off agreement extend beyond 2 years after the framework expiry date.

4. Can I award a call off agreement after the expiry date of the framework (even if I started the competition before the framework expired)?

No, it is not possible to award a call off agreement after the expiry date of the framework agreement. All call off agreements should be awarded prior to the framework expiry.

5. Can I extend my existing call off agreement after the expiry date of the framework agreement has passed?

Yes you can but only if there is a provision to extend written into your call off agreement. For example, your call off agreement may provide the expiry date of 01/01/2018 with the option to extend for a further 12 months. Any provision to extend should be stated clearly in the call off agreement at the point of award.

6. Can I directly award a call off agreement on this framework or do I have to conduct a further competition?

Yes you can, but there are conditions to doing so:

- 1) All directly awarded call off agreements must be based on the framework maximum payable prices as framework suppliers are not able to lower or negotiate rates when directly awarded a call off agreement.



- 2) When directly awarding a call off agreement, framework users are not permitted to alter the call off terms and must award based on the standard terms for the framework.
- 3) Direct award is only an option for Contracting Authorities who are awarding contracts below £50,000 per annum. Contracts with an annual value above £50,000 must be awarded following a further competition.

Contracting Authorities who intend to award following a further competition may include additional call off clauses to tailor the standard terms to their specific requirement.

Framework suppliers are also encouraged to bid competitively at further competition, meaning that customers awarding through this route will receive prices based on their actual requirements and forecast volumes, meaning that the prices they receive will be more competitive than those in the pricing matrix.

7. My requirement includes services from more than one lot of this framework agreement. Can I invite suppliers from more than one framework lot (conduct a multi-lot competition)?

Yes you can conduct a call off competition across more than one framework lot, but there are some considerations and restrictions to doing this:

- All suppliers on the relevant lots MUST be invited to compete, e.g. if your competition spans services from Lots 1 and 2, then all suppliers from Lots 1 and 2 must be given the opportunity to compete but,
- Suppliers may only bid for the elements of work that they have a framework agreement to provide services for. For example, if your competition invites suppliers from Lots 1 and 2:
 - Lot 1 suppliers may only bid for the services within scope of Lot 1
 - Lot 2 suppliers may only bid for the services within scope of Lot 2
 - Suppliers on both lots may bid for the whole requirement

When evaluating bids for multi-lot competitions, the different areas of the requirement should be evaluated separately. All Lot 1 responses should be evaluated together and all Lot 2 responses should be evaluated together. Where suppliers have responded with a bid for the combined requirement, the response should be evaluated by addressing the services for each framework lot in isolation. Contracting Authorities are NOT permitted to disadvantage suppliers because of their inability to provide a combined solution.

Some evaluation questions may be applicable to both areas of the specification; where this is the case, all suppliers can be evaluated together for those questions to avoid duplication.

Contracting Authorities should be aware that multi-lot competitions may result in multi-supplier / dual supplier awards.

8. Do I have to invite all of the framework suppliers from both framework lots?

If you require the successful supplier to provide services from more than one framework service lot, you may only invite the suppliers that have been awarded to those lots.



9. Do I have to conduct my competition through the CCS eSourcing system?

No Contracting Authorities are permitted to use any method of managing their competition that is most convenient to them. Some organisations prefer to use their own eSourcing systems. Use of the CCS eSourcing system is provided free-of-charge to all Contracting Authorities, however its use is not compulsory.

There is guidance on the CCS website to advise how to use the CCS eSourcing system. Please see the links below:

Customer Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esourcing-suite-guidance-for-customers>

Supplier Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esourcing-tool-guidance-for-Suppliers>

10. Do CCS provide template tender documents for this framework?

No there are no template tender documents for this framework other than the template order form and standard terms and conditions.

CCS do provide template tender documents on the CCS eSourcing system for generic use but these are not specific to this framework. Links to guidance for the CCS eSourcing system are provided in the point above.

11. I want to conduct a competition using the CCS eSourcing system. Is there guidance available?

Guidance documentation is available online. Please use the links provided below:

Customer Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esourcing-suite-guidance-for-customers>

Supplier Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esourcing-tool-guidance-for-Suppliers>

12. I want to compete a requirement that includes elements from more than one framework lot on the CCS eSourcing system. Can this be done?

The easiest way to do this is to create an RfQ from a template in one of the relevant framework lots, then adjust the invited supplier list to include only those that are on the necessary framework lots that your requirement sits in.

13. How much time should I allow suppliers to provide a tender response?

There is no minimum competition duration on this framework. The length of time that Contracting Authorities allow framework suppliers to provide responses to a tender is left to the discretion of the Contracting Authority.

Contracting Authority should be advised that suppliers may need longer to respond to a more complicated requirement and therefore should reflect this accordingly.



CCS suggest Contracting Authorities competing a standard requirement to allow a competition time of 6 to 8 weeks from publication of the Invitation to Quote (ITQ) to award; and longer for a more complicated competition.

14. How were supplier bids evaluated and does my call off competition need to follow the same criteria?

The evaluation criteria was 70 % Quality and 30 % Price at framework level.

At further competition the evaluation criteria is 70 % Quality and 30 % Price with a variation tolerance of +/- 10 % if required.

15. Can my incumbent supplier become a framework supplier?

No new suppliers cannot be added to the framework supplier list. All suppliers awarded a place on RM3798 Courier Services will remain for the duration of the framework agreement.

16. Are framework suppliers permitted to use sub-contractors?

Yes framework suppliers are permitted to use sub-contractors. There is a process in place for suppliers to request permission from CCS to add any new sub-contractors.

17. Can I amend or make additions to the standard call off terms?

Contracting Authorities may amend or add to the standard call off terms and conditions in order to make them more suitable to their own requirements.

Please note that there should be no material changes to the original standard terms.

All amendments or additions should originate from the Contracting Authority only.

18. Can I include service credits in my call off agreement?

Yes service credits are permissible within your call off agreement.

19. What is the service level threshold?

This is the point at which service credits come into effect.

20. What is the service credit cap

This is the financial limit that the total value of service credits incurred may not exceed within any given year. If service failures have generated sufficient service credits to breach this maximum limit the supplier should be viewed as having incurred a Critical Service Failure.

21. Do I have to complete the Call Off Order Form before I begin my competition?

It is best practice to complete as much of the Order Form as possible prior to beginning your competition and to include it amongst the suite of tender documents provided to bidding suppliers. By allowing bidding suppliers to view the Order Form up-front, there is no ambiguity about the terms of your requirement. Suppliers can also be asked to confirm their acceptance of the terms as part of their bid response as a pass / fail question. Those suppliers that have concerns about your terms may then raise them during clarification period, allowing you to make any changes publicly whilst the competition is still live.

Completing the Order Form post award places the awarded supplier in a greater position to negotiate terms that are more favourable to them. This process is also not transparent and arguably can result in a disparity between the terms that bidders assumed the contract would be based on and the contract that is actually awarded.

22. What is the role of CCS on this framework agreement?

CCS conduct Supplier Management with all framework suppliers. They also act as an escalation point in the event that Contracting Authorities are unable to resolve any concerns or disputes at a local level.

23. I need to make an amendment to my call off contract with my awarded supplier. How do I do this?

There is a contract variation form within the standard terms of your call off agreement. This can be located in Schedule 12 of the call off agreement.

24. Is volumetric pricing permitted on this Framework?

RM3798 cost models **do not** accommodate volumetric pricing.

All prices for this Framework represent **prices for actual package weight only**. It is the commercial decision of the Contracting Authority whether or not to permit Suppliers to price volumetrically, but this decision must be stated explicitly in your call off documentation so that all bidders are aware of your intentions.

Volumetric pricing is used widely in the courier industry and is usually employed when the dimensions of a box are inordinately larger than its actual weight.

Volumetric pricing is normally calculated using a formula similar to (the 5,000 figure may differ between providers):

$(\text{Length (cm)} \times \text{Height (cm)} \times \text{Width (cm)}) / 5,000 = \text{volumetric weight}$

IMPORTANT: Please be advised: if permitting volumetric pricing, customers must be aware exactly how, when and on what services such pricing will be applied.

Volumetric pricing methodologies are materially different to the framework costing methodology and as such it may be difficult or impossible to compare supplier price proposals with framework maximum rates.



25. Suppliers will not share their framework prices with me directly? Why is this?

Suppliers are aware that customers are requested to complete, sign and return a customer access agreement (CAA) to CCS before any pricing is provided to a customer.

The CAA is available for download from the CCS website framework webpage.

Once received, CCS will provide pricing for the Framework Lot(s) you have requested via an email attachment.

The CAA provides assurance to CCS and its suppliers that your organisation acknowledges the commercial sensitivity of the framework prices and that they will not be used in such a way to compromise the commercial interests of the framework and its suppliers.

26. How do I access YPO's Courier Services Dynamic Purchasing System - 700?

For advice on how to use YPO's Courier Services Dynamic Purchasing System, please contact YPO directly on itservices@ypo.co.uk or visit the YPO webpage for this service using the link below:

https://www.ypo.co.uk/framework/detail/900231#framework_details

27. Do I need to notify CCS when making an award on RM3798?

CCS request that all customers do notify us when awarding a call off agreement to a Framework Supplier. Doing so, helps CCS to understand which Suppliers are more successful in gaining business and to identify Suppliers that are not actively participating in competitions. Customers are not obligated to notify CCS when making a Call Off Agreement award, but doing so helps CCS to improve the standard of the Framework provision.

28. Do framework Suppliers have to have ISO 27001?

No, Suppliers were not required to be ISO 27001 compliant to bid for this Framework Agreement but some suppliers do have this standard anyway. If you consider that ISO 27001 compliance is a requirement for your call off competition, it would be best to check with the framework suppliers themselves if they already have this standard.

RM3798 Framework Suppliers were required to provide evidence of Cyber Essentials Plus certification.