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Crown  
Commercial  
Service



Home Office

## Quality Assurance and Testing Services

Buyers guidance (RM3810 - Quality Assurance and Testing for IT Systems)



**As the public sector uses and develops more online and digital services, there is an increasing need for continuous testing of these systems throughout the delivery lifecycle. The Quality Assurance & Testing for IT Systems (QA&T) Agreement is an easy and flexible route to market for you to buy specialist, independent testing services.**



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# 1

## Key facts summary

**If you are a public sector buyer, our QA&T agreement is the perfect solution for to test and assure the quality of your systems and designs.**

### Here are some of the reasons why:

- This agreement was developed in collaboration with the Home Office for Public Sector departments (inc the Home Office) who will use this agreement for their internal shared managed service for IT testing
- This agreement complements our other digital agreements (e.g. Digital Outcomes and Specialists (DOS), G-Cloud and Cyber Security Services)
- Reduced timescales – no further OJEU process needed
- Flexible Call-Off Contracts (agreements between you and the Supplier) can be up to 3 years to help with more complex requirements
- Short, medium and full tender mini competition templates are available, depending on your timescales and requirements
- Simply fill out your requirements and let the suppliers tell you how they'll deliver the service
- Government specific Terms and conditions have been created based on an agile approach
- Suppliers have already submitted maximum day rates and duration based volume discounts
- We've used a new simplified tender pack to make this agreement even more accessible for SMEs
- The agreement is compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015
- Government owned IPR, means that you can continue to develop yourself or with any third party, or share and reuse.

# 2

## What is the Quality Assurance and Testing for IT Systems Agreement?

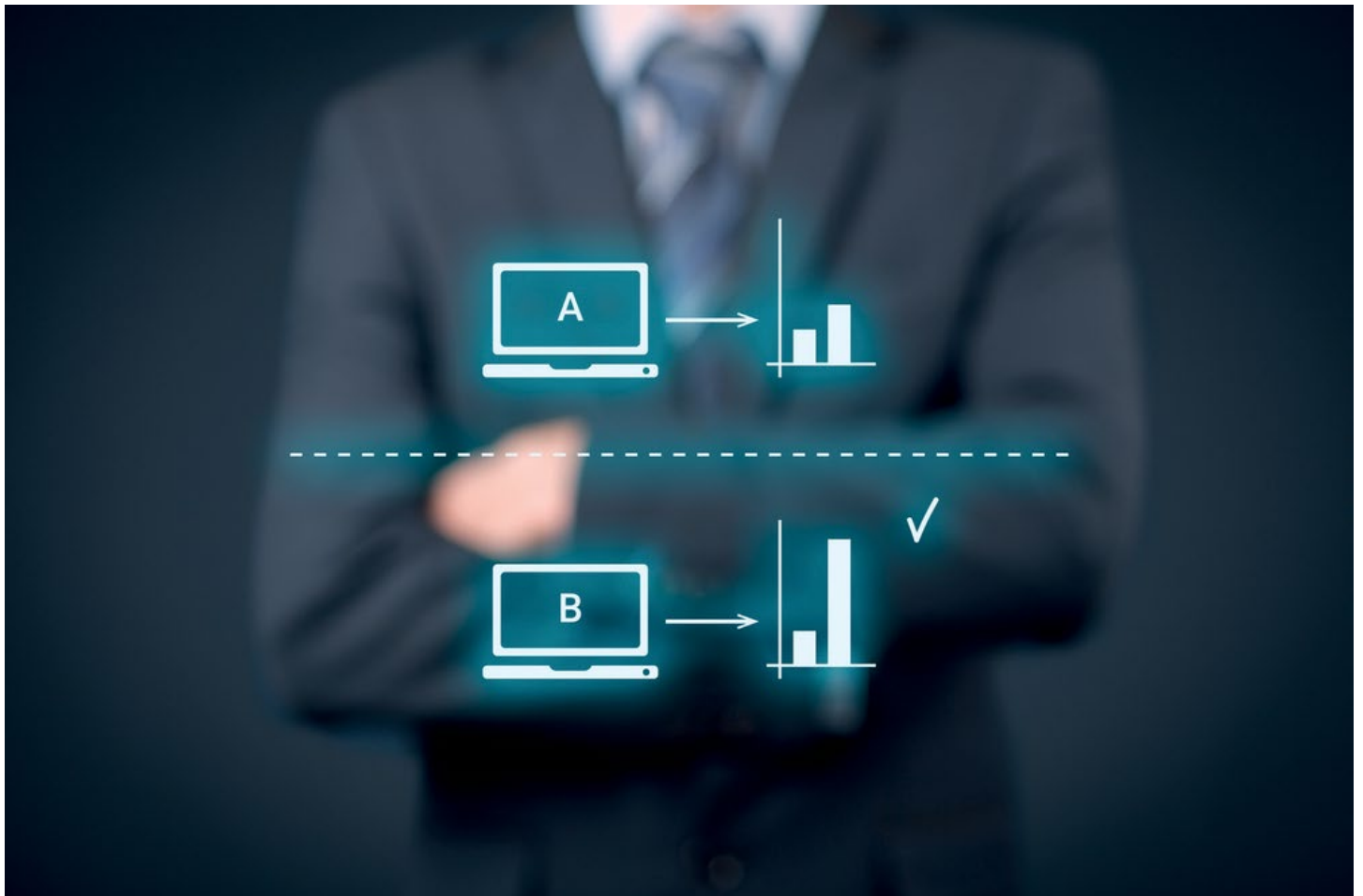
At Crown Commercial Service (CCS), we have been working together with the Home Office to develop a replacement agreement for the Home Office's expired Framework - Test, Design and Consultancy Services (TDCS).

This agreement will complement our other digital agreements such as:

- Digital Outcomes and Specialists (DOS),
- G-Cloud and
- Cyber Security Services

When you design and/or build a digital requirement or cloud service integration, you may need independent, specialist quality assurance services and testing before you go live.

This agreement provides a regulated route to market for public sector buyers to buy specialist, independent assurance and testing services, throughout your IT project lifecycle.



# 3

## What services are available?

Services available under this agreement are split across 8 lots listed below. This enables specialist suppliers (Including SMEs) to offer services to you via this central route to market.

### **Lot 1: QA and Testing Specialists**

### **Lot 2: Automation, Agile and Dev-Ops**

### **Lot 3: Load and Performance Testing**

### **Lot 4: Functional Testing**

### **Lot 5: Infrastructure Testing and Environments**

### **Lot 6: Operational Acceptance Testing and Disaster Recovery**

### **Lot 7: QA and Testing Management**

### **Lot 8: Strategic QA Consultancy**

#### **Lot 1 QA & Testing Specialists**

This lot provides access to a flexible and cost effective pool of Test specialist professionals, bought 'as a service' and capable of delivering services across the full life-cycle of your project or design process.

#### **Lot 2 Automation, Agile & Dev-Ops**

This lot is for Buyers looking for a supplier to develop and implement test automation regimes. This is typically to support cost effective continuous release methods within an agile or Dev-Ops environment.

#### **Lot 3 Load & Performance Testing**

This lot is for Buyers looking to determine how systems perform against specific performance needs and comparative baselines, including under load and stress.

#### **Lot 4 Functional Testing**

Suppliers in this lot can establish and manage an appropriate level of testing in line with your programme delivery plans. This may include validation and verification of the system against your specifications and requirements.

#### **Lot 5 Infrastructure Testing and Environments**

This lot is for Buyers looking to test the performance of their system infrastructures. This could include network provisions and hosting across LAN, WAN and cloud infrastructures.

#### **Lot 6 Operational Acceptance Testing and Disaster Recovery**

This lot focuses on testing and assuring the operational readiness of your system(s). This may include Service Readiness Testing, resilience and disaster recovery.

#### **Lot 7 QA and Testing Management**

Suppliers in this lost can help you to coordinate and manage all aspects of quality assurance and testing across your project life-cycle. This may potentially include the ownership (test design execution) of integration testing.

## Lot 8 Strategic QA Consultancy

This lot is for Buyers looking for strategic consultancy support across all aspects of the test and systems development life cycle. Additionally, suppliers in this lot can support with wider quality assurance elements.

## What is out of scope?

Products and services out of scope include but are not limited to:

- Any/all hardware & infrastructure
- Hosting
- Software or software licensing (other than any testing tools – lot 2)
- Networks or connectivity services (the QA and Testing services for networks and connectivity are in scope)
- Provision of interim staff / contractors – this is not a resource agreement

Full information can be found in the OJEU contract notice:

<http://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:421843-2016:TEXT:EN:HTML&src=0&tabId=1>



# 4

## Our 4 Buying Options

There are four options for running your Mini Competition under this agreement. Which option is best for you depends upon your project timescales and the complexity or scale of your Buyer Needs.

Depending on which route you choose, you can ask suppliers to provide:



For more details on each option see Section 7 Running a mini competition, or the Quality Assurance and Testing for IT Systems webpage via the following link: <http://ccs-agreements.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/procurement-pipeline/digital-future>

### Top Tips:

Crown Commercial Service can provide you with templates for each option and guidance throughout the mini competition process.



# 5

## Buyer Scenarios

### Scenario 1:

An NHS trust is streamlining its approach to IT system delivery and wants to establish how testing practices can be improved across the end to end testing and release process. The trust wants a supplier to carry out a strategic review to look at opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of current testing practices.

#### Route:

##### Lot 8: [Strategic QA Consultancy]

Lot 8 suppliers can provide consultancy support and strategic reviews of current operations. The likely output is an options and recommendations report that sets out the rationale for change, the associated costs and benefits and an outline implementation plan.

### Scenario 2:

A local authority is implementing a new HR and Finance system which is required to integrate with multiple other existing authority systems. They want to automate the testing as far as possible to improve the efficiency of the process but lack the skills to develop an automated approach within the existing team.

#### Route:

##### Lot 1: [QA & Testing Specialists]

Lot 1 suppliers can provide Test specialist professionals, specifically Test Engineers, to work with your test delivery to define and implement the automation approach as a service.

### Scenario 3:

The Home Office is launching a series of web hosted services and needs to ensure that each is capable of performing during periods of heavy demand from the public. Services that slow or crash when under heavy load will lead to significant criticism and jeopardise the delivery of mission critical Departmental objectives.

#### Route:

##### Lot 3: [Load and Performance Testing]

Lot 3 suppliers can plan and execute tests that will simulate performance of services under varying degrees load. This will provide assurance to the department that key services will continue to operate even at busy times. This testing service can potentially be completely outsourced depending on the security and technical limitations in place. .



# 6

## Searching for suppliers

Before you run your Mini Competition, find out which suppliers could meet your requirements using our Supplier Search document.

The supplier search document shows:

- Which services (Lots) suppliers can provide
- The geographical locations suppliers can work in
- The industries or sectors suppliers have expertise in
- The maximum day rates that supplier can apply in Mini Competition

Use this document to shortlist which suppliers you will invite to bid on your Mini Competition.

**All eligible suppliers must be invited to bid.**

### Top Tips:

Use the Supplier search when budgeting your project. The maximum day rates will give you an indication of cost based on the estimated length of your project.

When you have completed your Mini Competition, you can use the Supplier Search document to validate supplier bids.

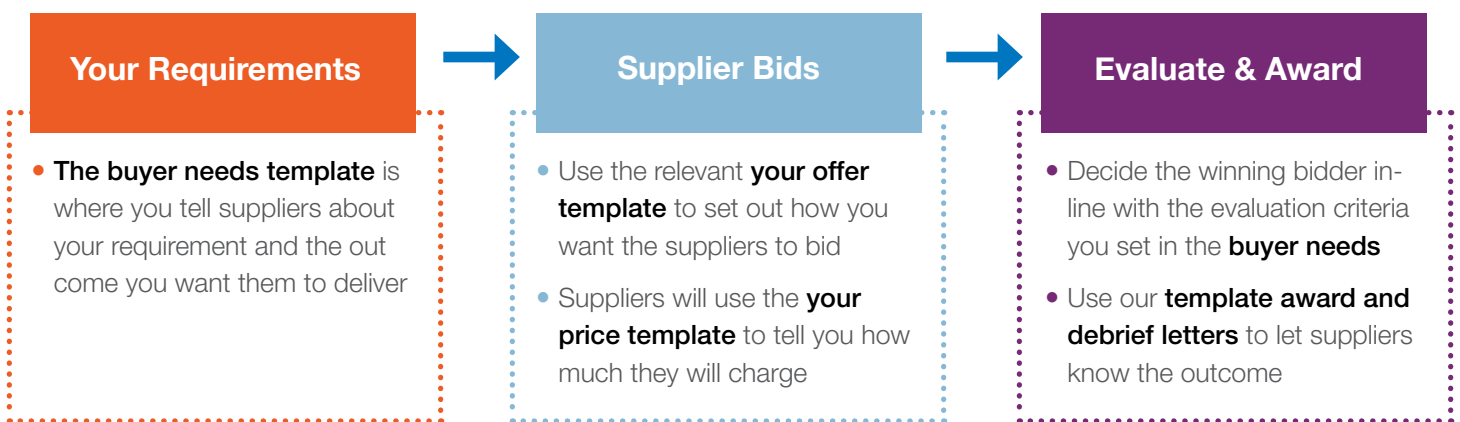


# 7

## Running a mini competition

Buyers who want to use the Quality Assurance and Testing for IT Systems Agreement have to follow a Mini Competition process. This process allows buyers to open competition under the framework.

Depending on which of 'Our 4 Buying Options' you decide to use, suppliers are required to tell you how they plan to deliver your requirement and how much they will charge to do so.



### Mini competition overview:

This process is explained in the 5 simple steps below:

#### Step 1 Identify your needs

Identifying and defining your user and business needs is a crucial stage of the Mini Competition process.

At this stage, you will need to:

- Get any spend approval which may be required
- Complete the 'Buyer Needs' template outlining your user and business needs
- Decide on which of 'Our 4 Buying Options' you will use
- Complete the relevant 'Your Offer' template with what you want to ask the suppliers
- Explain how you will evaluate and score the suppliers bids in-line with the frameworks criteria

**Top tip:** Document templates can all be downloaded from the agreement webpage

At this stage, you also need to set your project timescales. Make sure you allow suppliers time to prepare and submit their bids, especially on more complicated requirements. You should include precise details of the closing time and date in the Buyer Needs; so suppliers are clear on their deadlines.

Also within the Buyer Needs, you will need to tell the suppliers how you will be evaluating their bids – so clearly describe your evaluation model, including criteria and their relative importance.

**Top tip:** You may find engaging with the suppliers on the agreement before issuing a mini competition helpful. During this pre-market engagement you can ask suppliers questions to help refine your requirement; and also give an early insight into the opportunity. If you do decide to embark on any pre-market engagement activities it must be fair, transparent and open. You can engage via a Request for Information (RFI) which can be sent via email or utilising the free CCS eSourcing tool.

### Step 2 Launch your mini competition

Using the Supplier Search document, invite all eligible suppliers to bid against your requirements. During this Mini Competition process you must keep an audit trail of any dialogue and communication with the potential suppliers. This can either be done via your own procurement system or utilising the free CCS eSourcing tool.

CCS eSourcing tool can be accessed via this link:

<https://gpsesourcing.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sso/jsp/login.jsp>

The eSourcing tool contains a RM3810 template, which contains all the documents/templates you will need for your Mini Competition, as well as all the suppliers on this agreement. These documents are also available on the agreement webpage.

#### Top tip:

All eligible suppliers must be invited to bid for your opportunity. The suppliers on this agreement are able to select which Mini Competitions they participate in. If suppliers choose not to bid for your business, they should inform you of this as part of the procurement process.

#### Top tip:

More guidance on how to use the eSourcing tool can be found here:

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

### Step 3 Clarifications

While your Mini Competition is live and you are waiting for suppliers to bid, we recommend setting a clarification window. This gives potential suppliers with the opportunity to ask questions about your requirement.

All questions asked, and their responses, must be published to all potential suppliers.

#### Top tip:

CCS recommends, and can help you run and capture, a Q&A webinar session to address these clarifications.

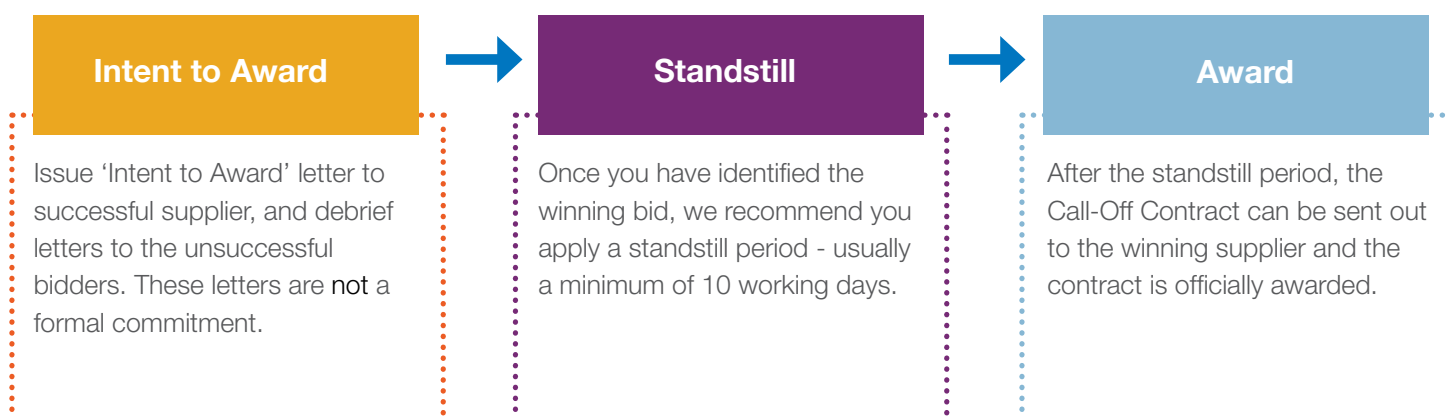
### Step 4: Evaluation

During your bid evaluation, you must treat all suppliers equally and fairly using the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT) criteria. It is also vital that you keep an audit trail and ensure that you have evaluated all bids in the same way you stipulated in the evaluation criteria.

Guidance on the evaluation criteria and weightings can be found in the relevant 'Your Offer' document.

## Step 5: Award

## Stages of the award process



You must tell all the suppliers of the outcome of the Mini Competition via email or letter. Unsuccessful suppliers will receive feedback detailing the relative advantages of the successful bid. Providing feedback is part of the EU procurement regulations; and it is also invaluable information for suppliers, which may help them improve their future bids.

You are now ready to award your contract.

Engage with the successful supplier to develop your Call-Off Contract and to begin the project.

### Top tip:

CCS can provide templates for your evaluation reports, award and debrief letters.

### Publish to Contracts Finder

Once you have awarded the contract, you should visit <https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder> and publish your award.

You must also advise CCS of successful award; see Section 10 Savings.

**NB.** Non-compliant buying will directly impact the legality and reputation of the framework and is strictly prohibited. Buyers who do not follow the correct buying processes will be at risk of legal challenge, fines and claims for loss of earnings, and the terms of the framework may be null and void in these cases.

# 8

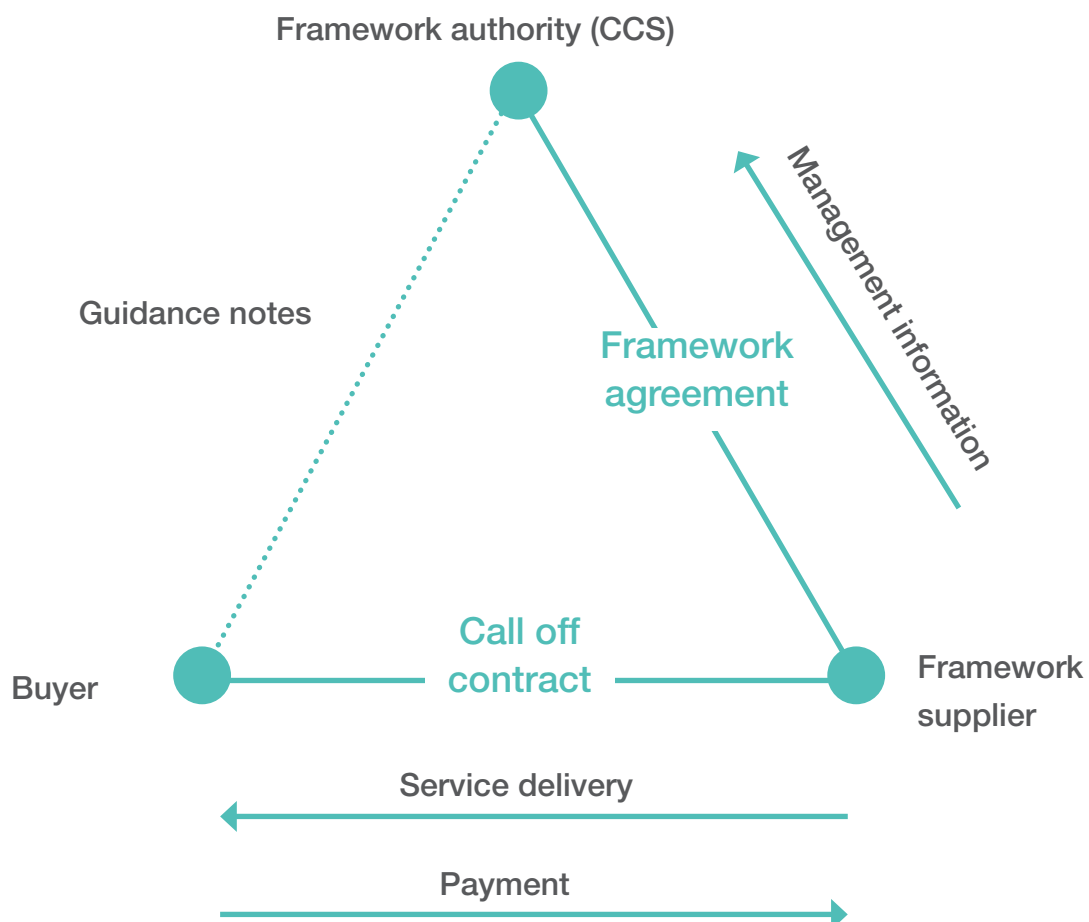
## Terms and Conditions

### The Call-Off Contract

The Call-Off Contract sits between the buyer and supplier and governs the purchase and delivery of the services. It is entered into by the Buyer and the successful supplier, once the contract has been awarded.

**Top Tip:** For this agreement the maximum Call-Off Contract length is three years. Buyers will specify the contract length within their 'Buyer Needs'. The option of longer contracts will give you more time with suppliers, to deliver more complex projects. For simple, short service projects we recommend a shorter contract term.

The below outlines the relationship between CCS, the Buyer (you) and the Supplier.



## How does the call-off contract' work?

**The call-off contract is made up of three parts:**

### Part A (variable)

The Order Form (an overview of the services to be provided throughout the lifetime of the agreement) and the Specific Terms (which are specific to this Contract)

This is created upfront before supplier bid for your requirements.

### Part B (variable)

Schedules (consists of the Buyer's Needs, the winning supplier's bid to the Buyers Needs, and the agreed work to be carried out)

### Part C (non-variable)

Standard RM3810 Call-Off Terms and Conditions (these are non variable terms)

Parts A & B are the variable terms which are specific to you, the Buyer, and your requirement. The standard terms in Part C are specific to this agreement and are non-variable. When applicable, Part A - the Buyer specific terms will supersede the standard terms. There is a table within Part A which outline the only terms which may need to be varied.

As part of this agreement, each supplier has accepted the terms and conditions which make up the Call-Off Contract. The suppliers cannot vary these terms, propose additional terms nor insert any of their standard terms of business.

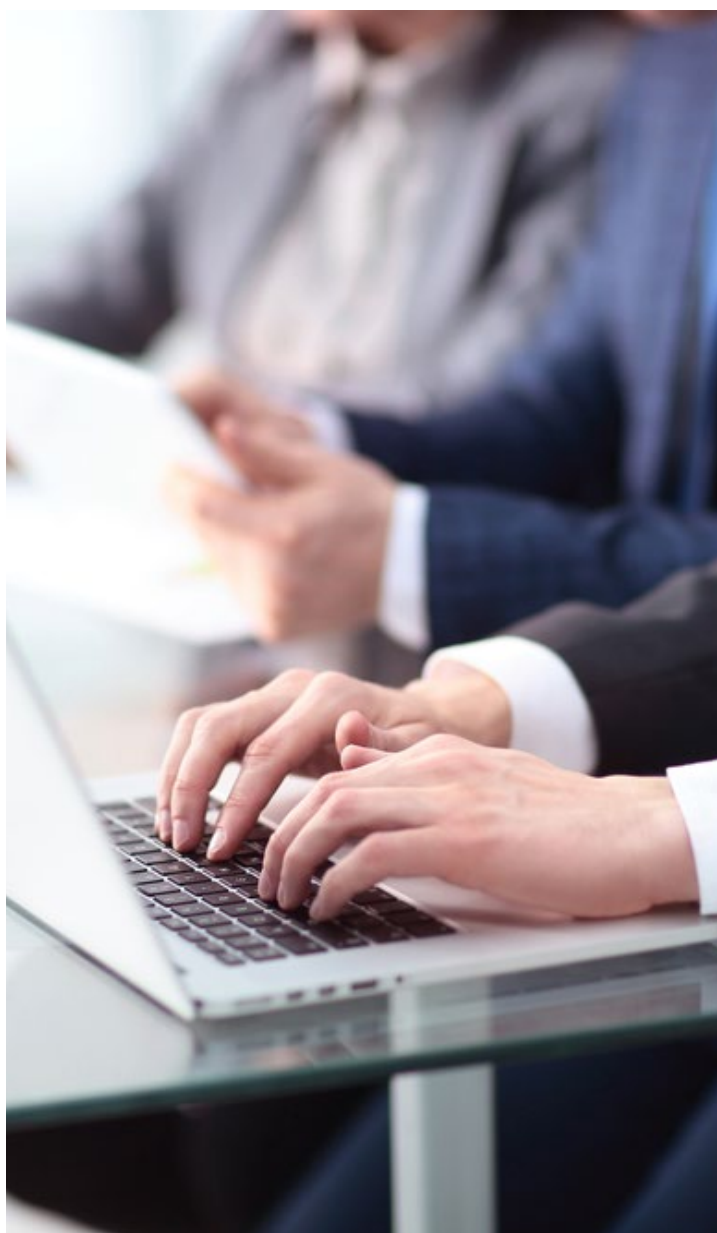
The Call-Off Contract templates can be found on the Quality Assurance and Testing for IT Systems webpage via the following link:

<http://ccs-agreements.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/procurement-pipeline/digital-future>

Any document or communication that is not as described in the templates will not constitute a Call-Off contract.

### Top Tip:

Notwithstanding the fact that the Buyer has followed the correct buying procedure, the Buyer shall be entitled at all times to decline to make an award for its services requirements. The Buyer may also cancel the award procedure at any time. The Buyer is not obliged to award any Call-Off Contract.



# 9

## Case Studies

For more complex requirements or where a buyer has a good news story, we encourage and urge Buyers to share their experience. One way to do this is via a case study. There is a simple case study template which can be found under the “Documents” tab within the Quality Assurance and Testing for IT Systems webpage.

<http://ccs-agreements.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/procurement-pipeline/digital-future>

Please send your case studies to: [cloud\\_digital@crownccommercial.gov.uk](mailto:cloud_digital@crownccommercial.gov.uk)





# 10

## Savings

Once you have completed your Mini Completion and awarded your Call-Off Contract to the successful supplier, we want to hear from you!

We have developed a benefits methodology to help us capture and report savings together. As a public sector buyer this helps demonstrate value for money (NAO Auditable).

This is a vital part of the Mini Competition process, and critical to CCS as a framework authority. It can help us to identify where savings are being driven and where we could do more.

Once you have completed your award, you must complete the Customer Benefits Record, which can be found on the Quality Assurance and Testing for IT Systems webpage via the following link:

<http://ccs-agreements.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/procurement-pipeline/digital-future>

This brief form requires you to fill in very basic information about your organisation, the successful supplier and the contract awarded to enable NAO Auditable savings and reporting.



# 11

## Templates and documentation

All templates and documentation can be located under the 'documents tab' within the Quality Assurance and Testing for IT Systems webpage via the following link:

<http://ccs-agreements.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/procurement-pipeline/digital-future>




# 12

## Contact details

Crown Commercial Service (CCS)

 [cloud\\_digital@crowncommercial.gov.uk](mailto:cloud_digital@crowncommercial.gov.uk)

 0345 410 2222

You can also learn more about what we offer online:

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

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

 Gov Digital Future

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

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