



Postal Goods, Services & Solutions

Frequently asked questions (RM6017)



Crown
Commercial
Service

working in partnership



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

We have provided answers to some common questions below.

What duration will the framework agreement be?

The framework covers a wide range of postal goods and services, including collection and delivery of mail throughout the UK, and internationally, and collection of packages to be delivered internationally. It also includes franking machines and mail room equipment used in a workplace and Hybrid Mail and Digital Inbound Mail Solutions to enable digitisation and greater efficiencies.

We are a large public sector organisation – can we arrange our own deal?

The suppliers have confirmed the agreement offers the best value for money option for the public sector, and the framework is fully compliant with Public Contracts Regulations 2015, thus eliminating the need for procurement to be carried out at a local level. We would encourage any public sector customer who has a requirement for postal goods and services to use the framework agreement.

Where would I view the framework pricing?

Pricing is available by specific request from our team at info@crownccommercial.gov.uk Please quote “RM6017” in the subject/title and state which lot(s) you require pricing for.

Do the prices within the framework include VAT?

No, the maximum framework prices, as provided in the price schedules, exclude VAT. As the rate of VAT can change, this is excluded from the framework price schedules and is charged by suppliers at the point of invoicing individual customers.

Where can I find the terms and conditions?

All terms and conditions / Call-Off Contract documents are available in the ‘Documents’ tab of the framework web page: <https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/agreements/RM6017>

How do I find out which suppliers have been appointed to the agreement?

Details on the awarded suppliers and what lots they cover can be found on the ‘Products and suppliers’ tab of the framework web page: <https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/agreements/RM6017>

Can my current supplier become a framework supplier?

No, framework supplier lists are fixed when the framework agreements are awarded and cannot be amended post award.

How do I know which lot to select?

Once you identify the goods and/or services you require, this can be checked against the Lot descriptions in the “Customer Guidance” documents which can be found under the ‘Documents’ tab on our website. Further information on the specification of each Lot is also available in the ‘Framework Lot Specifications’ document under the ‘Documents’ tab on our website.

If you would like help deciding which service or buying option will best meet your specific needs please get in touch with our postal category experts at CCS, YPO or ESPO.

What duration can my Call-Off Contract be?

Call-Off Contracts should generally reflect the duration of the framework agreement. However, the Call-Off Contract doesn't need to expire at the same time as the framework and can expire before or after the framework has expired.

The maximum call-off periods (inclusive of any implementation and/or optional extension periods) are as follows:

- **Lots 1 and 2: six (6) years**

Any lease contract under RM6017 will run for the length of the agreed lease term (6 years max). Trying to extend a lease once you have taken it out is not recommended as the pricing is based on the length of the lease. A lease is different as it is a specific financial contract with a legal status linked to this.

- **Lots 3 to 10 (inclusive): seven (7) years**

Is there a minimum Call-Off Contract length?

Lease contracts under Lot 2 should be a minimum of 1 year although please be aware that the maximum standard framework pricing is based on typical lease terms of 2 to 6 years.

There is no minimum contract length other than for leases under Lots 1 and 2 although customers should consider that suppliers may not bid for short term contracts.

We would recommend that you carefully consider an appropriate duration that enables a return on investment for both your organisation and the supplier. This should also help to ensure the opportunity is (commercially) appealing to suppliers and you receive as many bids as possible for your requirements.

How long can my Call-Off Contract run past the expiry date of the framework?

The Call-Off Contract period is flexible and can run beyond the framework expiry date. However, you should carefully consider your requirements and appropriate contract length in line with the Public Contract Regulations and your organisation's internal policies and controls when awarding close to the expiry of the framework term.

Can we simply stop supply from our existing contract on its expiry date and start to use RM6017 immediately on the following day?

If you begin the procurement process as far in advance of your expiry date as possible, then a smooth transition to the new framework agreement is more likely. Check your existing contract to ensure you are aware of both your supplier's and your own obligations regarding termination/expiry notice and exit management. Then work with your new supplier(s) to plan your transition to a new Call-Off Contract under RM6017.

How can I buy from this framework?

You can either direct award or run a further competition to access the agreement.

If there is only one supplier that meets your requirements or you can clearly establish which supplier meets your needs at the lowest price, you can make a direct award. However, you will need to fulfil set criteria if you wish to use this option. For example, no modifications or supplements to the call-off terms and conditions and acceptance of maximum framework pricing.

All capable suppliers under the relevant Lot(s) must be invited to bid for a further competition.

Further help and a detailed process map can be found in the “Customer Guidance” documents under the ‘Documents’ tab of the framework web page: <https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/agreements/RM6017>

What is the threshold for a direct award?

There is no threshold for a direct award however, specific criteria must be followed when using this process.

Is there a minimum spend level for a further competition?

There is no minimum spend for a further competition. In the majority of cases we would recommend a further competition to ensure best value for money, particularly for high value / volume requirements. If you want to allow suppliers to develop proposals or a solution in respect of your requirement; and/or you need to amend or refine the terms of the call-off contract to reflect your requirements (to the extent permitted by and in accordance with the procurement regulations), you will need to undertake a further competition.

What are the benefits of running a further competition?

Prices offered under the agreement are indicative or maximum prices. Suppliers are encouraged to bid competitively at further competition, meaning that customers awarding through this route will receive prices based on their exact requirements and forecast volumes, which may potentially be more competitive / lower than those in the framework pricing schedule.

Can I run a further competition over multiple Lots? If so, how?

Yes, this is possible but suppliers can only bid for the Lots they are awarded to and must not be excluded from bidding if they are not on all applicable Lots. Therefore, you would need to run multiple further competitions where the suppliers on each Lot differ in order to give all suppliers on each Lot the opportunity to bid. Suppliers must not be excluded from a competition if you wish to award a single supplier across two or more Lots.

Do I need to issue my procurement through the CCS eSourcing portal?

No, you do not have to use the CCS portal. You can use your own portal or other parties’ portals. A choice of eSourcing tools are also available from our partner organisations, YPO and ESPO.

We recommend that buyers check their organisation’s internal policies and procedures before using any of the CCS, YPO or ESPO eSourcing tools.

What additional assistance does CCS provide to help buyers use the framework?

We are able to assist in a number of ways. A full customer guidance document can be found on our website in the ‘Documents’ tab and our postal category experts at CCS, YPO and ESPO are also able to provide help and guidance, including options to optimise your mail processes and achieve savings on your postal services requirements. A specific toolkit for RM6017 will also be developed and published in due course. The toolkit will contain guidance and best practice to help you gather information for your mail profile and develop an Invitation to Tender (ITT) to run a further competition. The toolkit will be available under the ‘Documents’ tab of the framework web page.

Get in touch with the CCS team at: **0345 410 2222**
info@crownccommercial.gov.uk

Is there a specific value you would look at to determine whether or not CCS would run a further competition on behalf of a buyer?

In general CCS would consider running a further competition of approximately £50,000 or greater. However, if you have a requirement you would like to discuss please do not hesitate to contact us at info@crowcommercial.gov.uk

Can I aggregate my volumes with other public sector buyers?

Absolutely. If you can aggregate your requirements with other public sector organisations that need the same thing this would provide greater leverage to get a better deal in a further competition or eAuction.

How could I be involved in an aggregated further competition or an eAuction to reduce my prices?

A full guide to eAuctions is available under the 'Documents' tab of our website. You can also contact our eAuctions team to find out more about this option at eauctions@crowcommercial.gov.uk

To find out about how to be involved in an aggregated further competition please contact info@crowcommercial.gov.uk or phone **0345 410 2222** to discuss your requirements.

Can I award to multiple suppliers?

There is nothing stopping customers using more than one supplier. You should make any intention to award to multiple suppliers clear and transparent at the point of competing your requirements under the framework.

I have an existing Supplier – does TUPE apply?

We recommend that all buyers seek legal advice as to the relevance of TUPE to their current contractual arrangements.

What documents should I complete and send back if I wish to buy from the framework?

The key document is Framework Schedule 6 (Order Form Template and Call-Off Schedules), as this provides a summary of your purchase and is the binding contract between the buyer and the successful supplier. You must use the correct version of Framework Schedule 6 for the lot you are accessing i.e. Lots 1 and 2 or Lots 3 – 10. Both versions can be found on our website in the 'RM6017 Framework Schedules' folder under the 'Documents' tab.

Some of the Joint Schedules and Call-Off Schedules will also need to be completed with the specific details of your contract.

Do I have to use CCS' template Call-Off Order Form?

Yes, buyers must use CCS' Call-Off Order Form when completing their order/contract.

Why do I need to sign a Call-Off Contract?

It is a legally binding document defining the roles and responsibilities between the buyer and the supplier. CCS own and manage the actual framework agreement.

What are my options for invoicing and payment?

The framework agreement sets out a number of options relevant to the Lot you are accessing, which you can select when completing your Call-Off Contract.

Can I change the Service Levels that are set out in the Public Sector Contract?

Yes. Where you wish to implement Service Levels, this can be done in Call-Off Schedule 14 of the contract. The Service Levels and Service Credits stated in Call-Off Schedule 14 are provided only as an example and must be tailored to meet your specific needs.

Is subcontracting allowed under this framework?

Subcontracting is allowed on this framework, as set out in Joint Schedule 6 (Key Subcontractors).

Who manages the suppliers?

Once the Call-Off Contract has been completed, the relationship in terms of day-to-day performance / service delivery lies between the buyer and supplier, with CCS acting as an escalation point to deal with any contractual or unresolved issues.

What is the annual self-audit certificate?

Framework Schedule 8 (Self Audit Certificate) is a contractual obligation for the supplier to complete and return to CCS on an annual basis. It confirms the supplier has suitable systems in place for identifying and recording the transactions taking place under the provisions of the framework, and also that the supplier has tested their systems for identifying and reporting on framework activity and found them to be operating satisfactorily.

Can suppliers increase prices?

Prices for postage increase twice per year, currently in January and April, in line with Royal Mail tariff increases. This means that the maximum framework prices in Lots 3, 4, 6 and 7 for physical outbound mail items, may be impacted. Suppliers must apply for a framework price increase to CCS within a set time window when the tariff increases are published by Royal Mail. All other prices are fixed for two years to 30th November 2021 and after this period, a supplier can only apply for a price increase annually within a strict time window. Framework Schedule 3 (Framework Prices) of the agreement outlines the full conditions and processes to be followed.

If a supplier's maximum framework prices are increased, this does not impact prices under any existing call-off contract i.e. prices under existing call-off contracts do not also increase automatically. Suppliers must also request any price increases with individual customers using the same process outlined in Framework Schedule 3. In any case, prices under a call-off contract must never exceed the maximum framework prices. Prices under contracts for leased equipment through Lots 1 and 2 will be fixed for the duration of the lease term.

Can I buy x-ray mail scanning equipment or security screening services?

Yes, Lot 2 includes the supply of x-ray machines and Lot 10 provides secure mail screening services.

Can I buy machines that cater for recorded delivery through this framework?

Yes, machines available under the agreement have the capabilities to cater for recorded delivery items and the franking machines handle all Royal Mail delivery options.

What is the difference between “High Sort” and “Low Sort” (the level of sortation i.e. sorting mail into destinations)?

Any reference to “70/120” means this is a low sortation level. Any reference to “1400” means this is a high sortation level. A “120” sortation level does not exist anymore but is often still referenced. A “700” sortation level does not exist.

Contact us

If you would like help deciding which service or buying option will best meet your specific needs please get in touch with our postal category experts:

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