

Gigabit Capable Connectivity (RM6095)

Buyer Guidance

About this Guide

The purpose of this document is to provide you with a guide on how to conduct a competition (referred to as an Order Procedure in the DPS documentation) under the Gigabit Capable Connectivity Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS).

This document will help you follow best practice when purchasing services required for connectivity and infrastructure.

The guide includes 'handy hints' and additional information to help you use the framework.

To help you easily identify these elements we have used the following icons throughout this guide:



Handy hints



Tools to assist you



Additional information



Template documents

Contents

1. Introduction

- What can you buy through the DPS
- Who can use the DPS
- Benefits of this agreement
- What CCS have done so far
- How to buy through the DPS
- The role of CCS
- Before you start

2. The procurement process

- Defining the project objective
- Writing your specification
- Evaluation criteria
- Pre-market engagement and capability assessment
- Creating your supplier shortlist
- Issue your competition
- Review proposals from suppliers
- Awarding the contract
- Providing feedback to suppliers
- Contract management

Annex 1 – Procurement timetable

Annex 2 – Document checklist

1. Introduction

What can you buy through this Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS)?

This agreement provides a route to market for gigabit capable connectivity from a broadband connection to a full managed infrastructure build. You are also able to specify if you require Public Sector Network (PSN) and Health and Social Care Network (HSCN) compliance.

The agreement has been developed in collaboration with the Department for Culture Media and Sports (DCMS) to provide a specialist route to market for building upgrade projects where funding has been allocated through the Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) programme, the Rural Gigabit Connectivity (RGC) programme or other funding routes. This agreement can also be used for procurements outside of the funding routes.

Service Type	Description
Broadband Connectivity Services	Internet provision to enable the access of a wide range of managed wide area network services including but not limited to VPN tunnels, cloud applications, business class video conferencing, SD-WAN Citrix services, mail services, internet browsing, security services and content filtering.
Infrastructure Build Services	Provision and subsequent maintenance of any telecommunication infrastructure and associated commercial activities that might be required to provide a location with access to a wider market of gigabit capable connectivity service providers.
Managed Infrastructure Services	Direct access to telecommunications infrastructure between two specific locations. 'Managed' refers to the provision and subsequent maintenance of any telecommunication infrastructure along with guaranteeing an Indefeasible Right of Use for the buyer to access the infrastructure.

You can use the DPS to filter based on these service requirements, as well as by geographical location to ensure you find a supplier who can deliver in your chosen area.



Refer to DPS Schedule 1 Specification for more detail on the services covered

Who can use this DPS?

This agreement can be used by all UK public sector bodies including:

- Central government departments, arm's length bodies and executive agencies
- Non departmental public bodies
- Devolved administrations
- NHS bodies
- Education, including universities, colleges, schools, academies, further education providers
- Fire and rescue
- Local authorities
- Police
- Not for profit (charitable)
- Housing associations

The benefits of using this agreement:

- Allows you to access the latest connectivity technologies
- Agility and flexibility to meet the public sector's changing technology needs
- Accessible route for suppliers to apply to join at any time giving you access to the latest suppliers and solutions
- A dynamic filtering system, giving buyers flexibility based on requirements
- The filter system enabling the right suppliers to be matched and hear about the right opportunities
- Quality and price can be assessed based on your individual requirements
- Fully compliant with UK and EU regulations

What have CCS already done?

CCS have already, via the DPS platform, invited suppliers to populate their responses to the [Standard Selection Questionnaire](#) and subsequent DPS specific questions to enable buyers to filter on requirements. We have not mandated suppliers to provide evidence upfront as suppliers are able to self-certify that they meet the required standards. Therefore when you complete your competition and are ready to award you can request the supplier's evidence via the [DPS platform](#).

Suppliers have already agreed to the DPS terms, which will form the basis for your contract. These can be found on the [DPS platform](#).



Refer to the document 'Buyer Guidance on Public Sector Contract Schedules' on our agreement [webpage](#) for more information on the terms and schedules.

How to buy through the DPS

1. Register on the [DPS](#) platform
2. Navigate to the DPS for Gigabit Capable Connectivity
3. Use filters to reflect contract requirements and filter appropriate suppliers
4. Export list of suppliers from the DPS platform

Note: it is important that the exported supplier list is used within 2 working days, as new suppliers join continuously meaning you may have an outdated list beyond this point

5. Create a competition on your chosen eProcurement system, inviting the identified DPS suppliers and detailing the specification, evaluation criteria and contract format using the templates provided in the schedules
6. Conduct your competition and evaluate (allowing at least 10 days for supplier responses but ensure timescales are appropriate for the complexity of your procurement)
7. Determine intention to award to supplier/s
8. Return to the DPS platform and request any required evidence from winning supplier/s
9. Supplier/s share evidence through the DPS platform (recommended to do so within 2 days)
10. If satisfied with evidence, proceed to award
11. Inform CCS of contract award via the DPS using the [Buyer Confirmation of Award](#) template
12. Where appropriate, issue Contract Award Notice/Contracts Finder notice in line with [PPN 03/15](#)

The role of CCS

Our role is to provide you with advice and guidance to help you get the best outcome from the marketplace.

We can help with any queries you may have such as the best way to appoint a supplier and advice on structuring your evaluation criteria and how to structure your contract.

CCS manages the overarching marketplace and the suppliers at agreement level. You are responsible for managing the contract with your appointed supplier.

CCS is able to help with any issues you may have that require escalating.

If CCS currently undertakes procurement activity on your behalf please email info@crowcommercial.gov.uk to seek advice at the earliest opportunity.

If you have any other queries please email us at info@crowcommercial.gov.uk or call our Customer Service Desk on 0345 410 2222.

Before you start

Before using this agreement you should ensure that you have applied for and received the necessary budget approval and agreed your procurement strategy

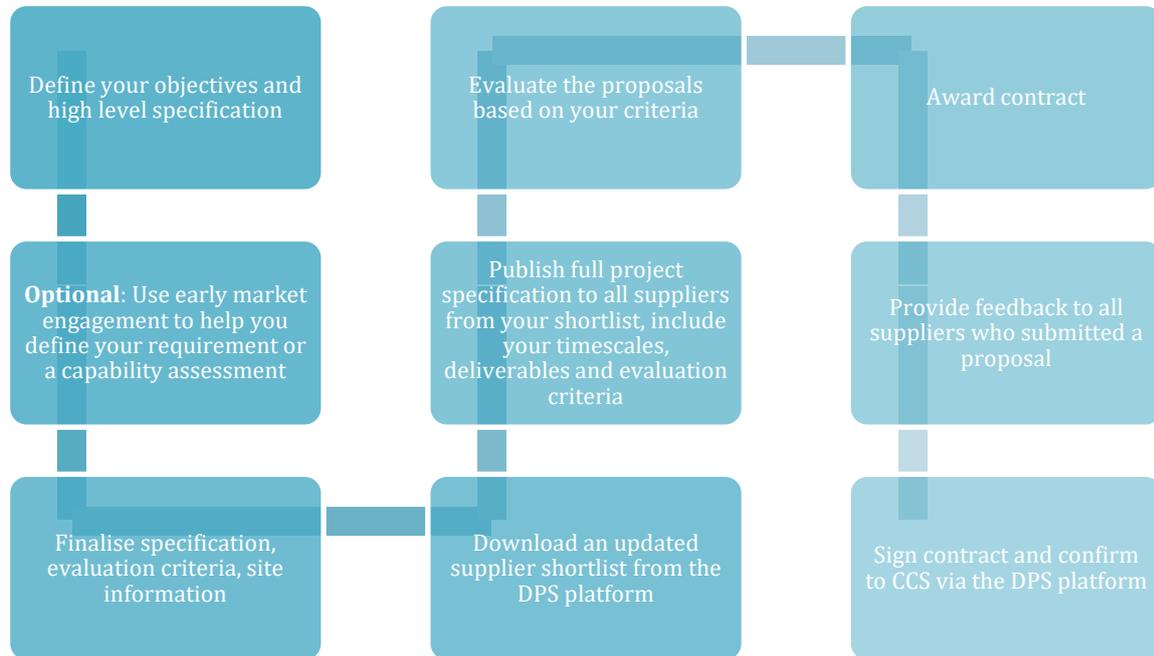
Consider the procurement approach you will use. Below we have detailed a procurement process in detail that may be more suited to a more complex procurement. If you have a very simple requirement it may be appropriate to follow the steps but to use the templates

provided within the schedules rather than a bespoke specification and pricing and evaluation template.

You should agree who will evaluate the proposals before you run a competition and build in enough time to evaluate the responses. Ideally, allow up to 6 - 8 weeks to complete the process, which is from the date of issuing your competition to contract award.

Your tender process should be proportionate to the value and complexity of your requirement. Suppliers will need a reasonable period of time to review and prepare a response. This includes allowing sufficient time for suppliers to ask clarification questions and consider your answers before the deadline for written responses.

2. The procurement process



Defining the project objective

The first step to procuring a supplier is confirmation of your budget and aligning objectives with any local digital strategies.

Once this is in place you can identify your site requirements, overall connectivity needs including any PSN or HSCN requirements, along with the overall outcome required.

Writing your specification

The specification 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.

For a simple procurement such as connectivity to a single site or small group of sites, the templates provided in the DPS schedules may be sufficient.

For more complex multi-site requirements it will be beneficial to provide an additional supporting project brief. In this case, focus on the project objective and provide any relevant information that will help suppliers to understand your requirement and the outcome needed. Relevant policies and standards that the project is looking to meet or that the supplier needs to adhere to should be clearly described such as PSN or HSCN compliance.

You may wish to include the details of which filters you used on the DPS platform to arrive at your supplier list to avoid any confusion about which suppliers have been invited to your competition.

Include delivery and timescale requirements where appropriate. Ensure that timescales factor in the ordering and delivery of the connection and especially where required time to transition from existing services. You could consider developing an implementation plan with milestones for larger projects.

If your competition contains sensitive or confidential information you may wish to use a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) to protect your brief and the information within it.

Evaluation criteria

You will need to decide in advance what information you need from suppliers and include this in your specification.

Evaluation criteria must be linked to your requirements. We've provided an evaluation template in DPS Schedule 7 that may be useful. This will allow suppliers to see how their proposals will be evaluated and the weightings that will be applied against the quality and price scores.

Design a pricing schedule that best fits the end requirement, ensuring clarity and fairness. We've provided a pricing template in Order Schedule 5 which may be useful. The template has been developed using best practice and a total cost of ownership approach.

Note: If your requirements are complex and you wish to include a staged evaluation that includes interviews or presentations on the supplier's proposal, this will need to be clearly detailed within your competition documentation including details of the percentage weightings to any individual stage of evaluation. You will also need to include details of how many suppliers or what the necessary score is to reach the next stage of evaluation.

Pre-market engagement (optional)

You may find it useful to communicate with suppliers ahead of issuing your final specification by undertaking a pre-market engagement exercise.

This phase is about ensuring that the market has a clear understanding of your requirements and to allow you to further shape your specification, gather ideas on new innovations and understand if there are any changes within the market that may influence your requirements. Please ensure this activity is undertaken in a fair and transparent way providing each supplier in your shortlist with an equal opportunity. This phase is not about refining your shortlist.

If you decide to speak to the industry ahead of your competition, you must prepare an outline of your specification before you contact suppliers, which can be done using a draft specification.

You will need to contact all the suppliers from your shortlist but you can choose how you contact them - for instance you can email them for information, invite them to an event or meeting to discuss your requirement or issue a formal Request for Information.

This stage is for information gathering and to help refine your specification and / or requirements.



If suppliers do not engage at this stage, don't assume that they do not want to participate, you should still include them in your competition if they are still in the supplier shortlist when you issue your documentation.

Use of a Capability Assessment (optional)

Following, or as part of, early market engagement you may choose to use a capability assessment. This will help you to identify which suppliers from your shortlist are going to be the most suitable. This is a more formal process than pre-market engagement, using a defined template to capture suppliers capability in relation to your requirements.

You may wish to run this process to refine your shortlist or to assess if any suppliers are capable of meeting your requirements.

You can use a series of 'yes' and 'no' questions that are mandatory for suppliers to pass to get to the written stage - you could, for example, use the ability to meet your stated deadline as a question.

Please use questions that relate to key requirements only at this stage, and not those that you would like to score in the main tender stage.



You do not need to send the final specification to suppliers who have deselected themselves or not engaged in the Capability Assessment unless you make material changes to the specification as a result of the exercise.



Dos and don'ts checklist:

Do

- ✓ Contact all suppliers from your shortlist
- ✓ Provide a reasonable time limit to email requests to make sure suppliers know when they need to respond by
- ✓ Keep an audit trail of all communication

Don't

- X Limit contact to suppliers that you know
- X Contact suppliers in different ways; each supplier should be given an equal opportunity to respond (i.e. don't email some suppliers and phone others to discuss your requirements)
- X Forget that all suppliers on the exported supplier list from the DPS can bid when you issue your final specification

Creating your supplier shortlist

Buyers are able to access the marketplace and export a supplier list by following these steps:

- Register or log-in to the DPS
- Navigate to the Gigabit Capable Connectivity DPS
- Choose the 'Access as a buyer' option and confirm your acceptance of the buyer access agreement
- Click on 'create new category export' and use the filters to reflect your specification and create your supplier shortlist
- Save your shortlist by clicking on 'Save category' and give the shortlist a unique name specific to your competition. Export the list of suppliers from the marketplace.



You must use the exported supplier list within 2 working days, as new suppliers may be added at any point, thus changing the list of suppliers eligible to compete. Please refresh your final list as necessary.

Issue your competition documentation

Your completed specification along with all other relevant documents, must be issued to all the suppliers on the shortlist obtained from the DPS platform after filtering on your requirements.

You must include in your competition:

- Specification
- Timescales
- Order Form detailing which of the optional schedules apply to your competition and any Special Terms that may be used to amend the mandatory schedules (only recommended where absolutely necessary and in line with procurement regulations)

At this time the Order Form doesn't need to be signed as this will happen at contract award stage. The Order Form serves as information to the supplier about what terms apply and key information for your competition. We have drafted the standard clauses to take a balanced approach to risk and performance, accounting for specificities in the connectivity market such as engineering difficulties and wayleaves.



Yellow highlighting of Schedules within the Order Form indicates that they are optional - you may choose whether or not to incorporate them into your Order Contract. Schedules that are not highlighted are mandatory and must be included in an order Contract. In both cases you can amend the content of a Schedule via a Special Term documented in the Order Form and communicated as part of your competition, provided that this is within procurement regulation requirements. Refer to the document 'Buyer Guidance on Public Sector Contract Schedules' on our agreement [webpage](#) for more information on the terms and schedules.

Please ensure you invite the supplier contact listed in your exported shortlist to ensure you reach the right supplier contact.

Under a DPS this must be done electronically, which can be done either via the CCS online procurement tool ([eSourcing](#)), your organisation's own procurement tool or by emailing suppliers.

Using a portal gives an auditable approach to the tender process.

It is used to:

- Respond to clarification questions
- Track bid responses
- Send reminders to bidders
- Communicate to successful and unsuccessful suppliers

During the competition, clarification questions and answers must be anonymised and published for all suppliers.

Under a DPS the minimum time for proposals to be submitted is 10 days, however you should consider the complexity of your requirement and allow as much time as is sufficient for suppliers to develop their proposals.



Dos and don'ts checklist:

Do:

- ✓ State that the competition is being run through CCS Gigabit Capable Connectivity DPS at the start of competition documents
- ✓ Provide a clarification period for suppliers to ask questions
- ✓ Specify any particular requirements that need to be fulfilled
- ✓ Provide a clear deadline for responses
- ✓ State your evaluation process clearly
- ✓ Make sure that your requirements, documentation and evaluation are proportionate to the value and complexity of your specification
- ✓ Ensure suppliers have equal access to information during the competition process and publish all responses to questions asked or clarifications raised to all suppliers involved
- ✓ Provide feedback to all parties

Don't:

- X Be overly prescriptive, or include specific brands if it can be avoided
- X Use acronyms or civil service terminology - use plain English
- X Overwhelm the reader with excessive data
- X Forget to disclose any conflict of interest issues you may have in your specification

Review proposals from suppliers

All suppliers will need to provide a written proposal in response to your specification. It is recommended that you assign 3 people to evaluate the proposals as this makes reaching an objective decision easier.

Responses should **not** be discussed outside of the evaluation team and pricing information should be treated as commercially sensitive.

Make sure that you maintain a fully documented audit trail of the results and final award decision, which will be useful when providing feedback to the participating suppliers.

If you use a staged evaluation, you cannot ask questions in subsequent stages that you have already used in previous stages.

Awarding the contract

As part of your compliance check before awarding your contract, you have the option to request evidence of insurance and cyber certificates and other requirements provided by the suppliers on the DPS platform.

To do this, you will need to log-in to the DPS and navigate back to your saved supplier list that you generated prior to issuing your competition. Find the supplier(s) you wish to see further information for and click on 'see evidence'.

The suppliers will then be sent a notification and will give you access to see the evidence.

Following the successful completion of your competition evaluation you can now award a contract to the successful supplier.

Once you have the relevant internal approvals (if applicable) in place you can notify all participating suppliers of the outcome.
A standstill period is not mandatory but can be used voluntarily for high value contracts.

You must use the signature section of the Order Form (DPS Schedule 6) to finalise your contract, which is aligned to the contract terms set out in the agreement.

Once your contract has been awarded you will need to log back into the DPS platform to notify CCS of your award.

Please remember to fulfil your organisation's transparency requirements and publish details of your award on Contracts Finder, where necessary.

(buyers need to sign-in via the link in the top right corner in order to post details).

The Procurement Policy Note relating to the use of Contracts Finder can be found [here](#).

Provide feedback to suppliers

You should provide constructive, written feedback to all participating suppliers and include a full breakdown of their scoring.

Feedback comments should be objective and link back to the evaluation criteria. This will help suppliers understand how they can improve for future opportunities.

Your obligations as a buyer

- Providing a clear specification setting out your requirements (services and deliverables) and timelines of each phase of work
- Communicating with your supplier on a regular basis to discuss progress and research performance
- Promptly addressing any issues with your supplier
- Agreeing at the start of the project how frequently you expect to receive reports from your supplier, this should be in line with the requirements in your specification
- Pay your supplier within 30 days of approving the invoice. Check invoices against the rates and deliverables agreed in your contract

You should be able to rely on your supplier to give you expert advice and consultation that comes from its collective wisdom and experience. A good supplier will explain their strategy and offer honest advice. As a buyer, you should also proactively advise the supplier on anything it needs to know to deliver the best results.

Contract management

By ensuring you have regular communication with your supplier you should be able to avoid any major issues.

In the event that you do experience performance issues with your supplier, you should take the following steps to address the issue as quickly as possible.

1. Raise the issue with your supplier lead and / or commissioner lead as soon as possible
2. Clearly set out your concerns and agree a plan of action with the supplier including a deadline for resolution - put in place more frequent status updates if necessary
3. If the issue is not resolved by the agreed deadline, escalate the matter internally and to supplier directors
4. If the issue is not resolved by the agreed deadline, contact CCS to notify us and agree next steps
5. If you have carried out all reasonable steps to rectify the issue, allowed time for recourse and are still not satisfied, then you will need to decide how to resolve the issue with internal colleagues and CCS

Annex 1

Example timetable for appointing a supplier

The timetable below provides an example of the timescales that are involved in a competition, from the date of issuing your tender to contract award. Please engage with your commercial function when planning the timetable.

You should allow up to 6 - 8 weeks if you choose all recommended options. You may require more time for more complex, high value projects.

Task	Optional?	Owner	Day	Week
Issue Tender	No	Buyer	1	1
Clarification Deadline	No	Buyer	20	3
Deadline for response to Clarifications	No	Buyer	25	3
Deadline for submission of proposals	No	Supplier	30	4
Evaluation of proposals	No	Buyer	31-35	4-5
Award Contract	No	Buyer	36	6
Supplier Feedback	No	Buyer	36	6
Project Inception Meeting	No	Buyer/Supplier	40	6

Consider extending the submission period and evaluation period for complex and multi-site procurements.

Annex 2

Document checklist before you issue your competition

- State RM6095 Gigabit Capable Connectivity at the start of your competition document
- Specification to include a completed site list template as a minimum
- Tender timetable which sets out the high level stages of the process and when you intend to award and start the contract. Include dates for the clarification period, when suppliers have to ask questions by and when you will provide responses.
- Detail on the process and evaluation of the Capability Assessment stage (if used)
- Detail on the process, evaluation and weighting of written proposals
- Detail on the process, evaluation and weighting of the presentation stage (if used)
- Appendices (if used)
- Order form detailing special terms and which optional schedules are included
- Tendering instructions (details on the submission process specific to your organisation)
- Procurement tool registration details (if inviting suppliers to your organisation's own portal)