



Running a mini-competition – RM6160

How you can buy from the Non Clinical Temporary and Fixed Term Staff agreement where all suppliers can bid.

The purpose of this article is to help you when you are looking to run a mini competition through the Non Clinical staffing agreement. The aim is to give you a light overview of the process with some hints and reminders to ensure that you complete the process correctly.

When running a mini-competition you must:

- comply with the terms of the framework agreement
- decide how you will assess the bids, following any rules the framework has
- decide the level of service you want
- decide if you want to run an expression of interest process
- send an invitation to tender to all suppliers who can provide what you need
- fairly assess all the bids you get
- choose the supplier that offers best value for money
- award the contract to the winning supplier

Prepare your invitation to tender

Invitations should include:

- a covering letter
- a timetable
- how to ask questions
- how to submit a bid
- your specification – which should include
- a precise description of what you need
- an explanation of what it you want to achieve (if needed)
- the length of the contract
- what you expect from the contract
- when you want the contract to start
- any other details important to you

For more information on writing a specification, see [here](#)

- your award criteria
- specific levels of service you want



your terms of appointment **Covering letter**

Include all the information people need to submit a bid.

Timeline

Set deadlines for:

- the clarification period – when suppliers can ask you questions
- when suppliers must submit their bid
- the standstill period if you have one – we recommend 10 days, ending on a working day.
- when you intend to enter into the contract

Give suppliers enough time to:

- understand your needs
- ask questions and use the information in your reply
- respond to your questions and pricing requirements

You must send your invitation to tender to every supplier on the framework who can meet your needs, unless you have run an expression of interest process.

Decide how you'll assess the bids

Before you send out your invitation to tender, decide your 'award criteria' – the system you'll use to decide which bid:

- best meets your specification
- is the 'most economically advantageous' – the one that best combines price and quality

Give each criteria:

- a range of scores – such as 1 to 5, with 5 highest
- a weighting – a figure you multiply the score by depending on how important the criteria is

Use an expression of interest to cut the number of bidders

If you want to find out how many suppliers are interested in bidding then you can send an expression of interest (EOI) to them all. After doing this, you only need to send your invitation to suppliers who responded.





Your EOI should include:

- an overview of your needs
- an overview of what is required
- how long the contract will last, including any important deadlines when they must respond by

Answer questions from the suppliers

You should have a 'clarification stage' – a time when suppliers can ask questions. No matter who asks the question, in most cases you should generally:

- send the question and reply to all the bidders with the same information
- anonymise the question, so no one knows who asked it

Do not reveal copyrighted or sensitive information. Ask suppliers if they are happy for you to publish their question and your answer. If they say no, consider their request and give them the opportunity to withdraw the question if you do not agree.

We recommend that you:

- ask suppliers to email the questions
- keep a log of the questions and the answers you gave

How to decide the winning bid

Assess the bids using the award criteria you sent out in your invitation to tender.

You must:

- not open any bids before the deadline
- treat all bids fairly and equally
- record how you made your decisions so you can defend them if needed
- keep confidential, secure, auditable records
- award the contract to the highest scoring bidder

Who should assess the bids

It's best to have at least 2 people assess each bid. When they're finished they should compare their scores and:

- discuss where they've scored differently
- reach an agreed score





This process is called moderation. Be aware, the more people involved, the harder it can be to reach an agreed score.

Bring in a specialist if you need expert knowledge to assess a criteria.

Keeping records

Keep a record of all scores, comments and moderation decisions.

Notify suppliers and award the contract

Send a letter to all the bidders at the same time including:

- the name of the winning bidder
- the award criteria you used
- the scores for the winning bid
- the relative advantages of the winning bidder
- when the standstill period ends, if you have one
- their scores and feedback – for unsuccessful bidders

Feedback to unsuccessful suppliers

If an unsuccessful bidder asks for further feedback you do not have to give it. If you do, you should:

- only comment on their bid – do not share details of anyone else's
- try to give positive feedback

If you decide to meet face-to-face to provide feedback, keep notes during the meeting and have more than 1 member of staff present.

Standstill period

We recommend that you have a standstill period of at least 10 days between telling the bidders your decision and formally awarding the contract. It gives time for any unsuccessful supplier to challenge the decision if they believe it's unfair.

If the period ends on a non-working day, extend it to the end of the next working day.

Award the contract

After the standstill period, tell the successful supplier that you're placing the contract with them. Your organisation and the supplier should then sign the contract.





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The contract's terms and conditions will have been set as part of the tender exercise and you should not change them. You can only add in those things that you agreed as part of the buying process.

We're here to help

If you are thinking of running a mini competition through the Non Clinical Staffing framework and would like more help from the team, please contact us and we will be happy to help you.

W [Non Clinical Temporary and Fixed Term Staff](#)

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