

In the case of higher value or strategically important contracts, or where a large number of expressions of interest are expected, a questionnaire may be issued to interested suppliers. This should be identical for all suppliers and should cover the following points:

- organisation - background, principal activities (past, present and planned), ultimate parent details, organisation chart and professional/commercial affiliations;
- finances - copies of annual reports for the last three years and audited accounts (including those of the ultimate parent company, if applicable) and a statement of turnover in respect of the requirement;
- litigation - a statement of the supplier's involvement in any court action over the last three years and whether there are any actions pending. Details of the supplier's insurance protection in respect of indemnity cover should also be sought;
- staff - average annual staffing and numbers of managerial staff for each of the past three years, together with the number of staff directly involved in the provision of the service to which the requirement relates. Where appropriate, experience in transferring in staff from a client organisation and the application of TUPE regulations should also be covered;
- experience - in providing similar services and managing change programmes, including examples of work conducted in collaboration with other suppliers and the use of subcontractors;
- track record - other work of a similar type undertaken, including references concerning performance, delivery, reliability and responsiveness;
- quality - details of quality accreditation, documentation and procedures (see [PUM2180](#));
- training - evidence and experience of staff training and development programmes relevant to the requirement; and
- environment – the supplier's environmental policy statement and information on the impacts and significant effects of the products/services should be requested if relevant (see [PUM5210](#)).

It is acceptable to re-use existing financial and organisation information if it is still valid.

In order to examine trends in the supplier's business it is important to obtain information covering the previous three years. Companies with less than three years' history should not be excluded but great care should be taken in assessing their financial standing and experience, balancing this with the importance of admitting new players to the market. If a consortium bid is proposed, the prime bidder should provide a single set of responses covering all of its members.

The pre-qualification criteria must be agreed before the Contract Notice is placed and the criteria, together with the evaluation methodology, must be clearly documented for each project

The manner of scoring should be predetermined and should be such as to ensure that all appropriate potential competitive suppliers are invited to tender. The process should be objectively and consistently applied by all those on the Pre-Qualification Panel and must also be clearly auditable. In order to ensure that this happens, care must be taken to ensure that suppliers are appraised only against information requested in the Contract Notice, although information already held may also be taken into account (in addition to that provided within the supplier response) as long as it is strictly relevant and valid, and that the results of the appraisal are appropriately weighted and evaluated.

Buyers should not merely select a set number of the highest scoring suppliers at pre-qualification as this can lead to the inclusion of suppliers who realistically have no chance of being selected, thus wasting their time preparing the bid and the Department's in evaluating it.

No supplier should be rejected merely because of a minor clerical error or omission. Therefore, in the event of an administrative error, it is possible to refer back to the supplier provided that all parties are treated equally.

A report of the pre-qualification process, recording the reasons for inclusion and exclusion, should be placed on the file. This should be subject to supervisory review and to the approval of the Contract Sponsor. The Invitation to Tender shortlist should be reviewed and signed off by the Senior Buyer.

All parties registering an interest should be informed whether or not they have been shortlisted.