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re-Qualification Questionnaires

A Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) is a useful step in the facilities services procurement process. It is a questionnaire assessing the suitability of a service provider's commercial, technical and financial capabilities and provides a method of shortlisting interested parties.

Pre-Qualification is used by public and private sector organisations to ensure that they only engage fully with service providers that they would want to do business with. PQQs may also be used to control admission to an approved supplier list, to award supplier accreditation, to enter a contractor onto a Framework Agreement or to register them on an online supplier portal.

An effective PQQ is effectively a rejection process aimed at discarding those bidders who are considered unsuitable in comparison with pre determined criteria. The key to a successful PQQ lies in determining what those criteria are. Many PQQ exercises fall short due to an inadequate thought process failing to identify a clear strategy and the characteristics of the service provider required to deliver it.

For example, if the strategy calls for a supplier of a particular size with a national presence that self-delivers certain services and has previous experience in one sector, then the questions need to easily identify those bidders that do not meet those criteria.

The PQQ should be about the past not the future. Many buyers make the mistake of including questions about how the provider would approach the new project. These issues should be reserved until the formal tender stage which is about selection rather than rejection. By including such questions at the PQQ stage they force suppliers to come up with solutions without the benefit of the full information. They also condemn themselves to having to read and compare large volumes of text from providers they would never do business with anyway.

Assessing PQQ's should be a simple box ticking affair. Most questions will require Yes or No responses. The provider either meets the criteria to progress or they don't. Other questions may be scored on a points system. Then if there are still too many left in the game the lowest scores can be rejected.

The bidders aim is to show that they are a safe and appropriate choice. The buyer is looking to move to the bid stage with a small number of providers, all of whom would be suitable business partners if they can come up with the right technical and commercial solution.

The Office of Government Commerce (OGC) www.ogc.gov.uk provides guidance on the use of Pre Qualification Questionnaires in the procurement process