

## Top Tips for Completing a Bid for a Public Sector Tender

Finding business in today economic climate is similar to the task of finding a new job... it is tricky! Most companies are not looking to expand at the moment, and so they are either choosing not to carry out activities that may require external support, or they are choosing to complete more and more projects in-house. For small and medium sized businesses who depend on other, larger companies putting out projects for external tender, this shift in the delivery of work from utilising external support to utilising internal, salaried support can be devastating.

Historically, when business opportunities coming out of the private sector started to dry up, small and medium-sized companies would look to the public sector for work. The public sector has always been notorious for its use of consultants, agencies, and local and national companies - particularly within the NHS and local government. And the public sector is also so large that most independent businesses can find a way into this sector as a providing body. Companies as varied as estates management, communications, health and safety trainers, service improvement professionals, writers and designers can all find a solid and valued place within the public sector.

However, with the recent recession, the overwhelming debt seen within the public sector and fewer internal vacancies floating around within the public sector, here too are we seeing cuts in the number of tenders that are being put out there for small and medium-sized companies to bid for. Never before has it been so difficult for private firms to locate, secure and retain public sector contracts. The competition is fierce and the budgets available are low.

There are however still some good public sector opportunities out there for the taking...you just need to be able to locate them and then present the commissioning body with a bid response that ticks all of their boxes. So, if you are looking to branch into or expand within the public sector, here are a few tips to help you write that winning tender response:

- Make sure you are one of the first companies to become aware that a tender opportunity is available by signing up to public sector tender websites and receiving their daily emails. When you complete the sign up process, be sure to provide accurate details about the type of tenders you are interested in receiving. This will reduce the amount of time you waste each day searching through the tender bulletins
- Make sure that you stick to deadlines. There will be a deadline for the submission of an expression of interest, a PQQ submission and a full bid submission. Ensure that you are aware of and that you meet each of these deadlines.
- Once the full tender documentation is in, read through the required information first. Do you meet the criteria? Is there a certain level of financial stability you need to be able to display? If so, can you display this coherently?

- Look through the bid questions and see who within your team is best suited to responding to each bid. Allocate out questions appropriately.
- Once each response is drafted, review the response against the marking criteria that the commissioning organisation will use (if this is available to you). How would you score you? Are there any responses you can now strengthen?
- Check that your final bid response looks as good as it sounds. Presentation is crucial here - think of it as your first impression!
- Before submitting your response, do a final check through to ensure that you have included all required documentation, that everything is correctly labelled and that it is all in the correct order.

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