

Bidders Day Events

What is a Bidders Day?

A Bidders Day (also known as an Open Supplier's Meeting) is a forum where all potential tenderers are invited to attend at the same time and venue, to address areas of the Invitation to Tender Documentation (ITT) which may require clarification, so ensuring that all potential tenderers receive identical information.

Bidders Days are generally held during the ITT stage of the tender process but it can also be beneficial to have a bidder's day at the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) stage, if the goods or services you are tendering are complex or have not been previously subjected to competitive tendering.

Commercially sensitive information should be guarded at all times.

The Contracting Authority/Department holds the briefing session to explain:

- What they are commissioning/procuring
- What they are potentially looking for from interested organisations.
- How the bids will be evaluated

Bidders Day Considerations

A Bidders day is advisable when there are potentially a large number of organisations that are interested in bidding for the publicised tender and/or it is not a straightforward area as mentioned above. This process can be a powerful tool in the tender process. It aids clarity and transparency by ensuring that all interested parties receive the same message.

The Bidders Day's should be held after the advertisement of a tender (or PQQ) so that it enables interested parties to review the documents and come prepared with questions they wish to have explained. The obvious benefit is that it widens all bidder's knowledge of what you are trying to achieve, and also transmits the same message to all bidders at the same time. With this information their bidders should be correspondingly more informed about the service requirements and hence should improve their tender responses. It also helps potential bidders decide whether they wish to be involved in the process, saving both the bidder and the evaluator time and cost.

If it takes place too soon supplier's will not be prepared, if it takes place too close to the return date sufficient time will not be available to tenderers to take account of the questions and answers received at the bidders day.

A bidders day will not be necessary for every tender exercise. A judgement will have to be made by the project team prior to the issue of the ITT whether or not such a meeting is required, in order that it may be planned into the procurement timetable.

All speakers should discuss their input prior to the meeting to ensure that there are no contradictions or overlaps in information to be provided.

A factor to be considered is that if the Bidder's Day is held at a venue that is chargeable, this cost will need to be met by the contracting authority/department. It may be advisable to contact venues and confirm all costs (including refreshments if you plan to provide them) with the budget holder before confirming the Bidder's Day within the tender documentation.

Actual Bidder's Days

Bidder's days should be chaired by the person who is taking the lead in the procurement exercise, supported by any other relevant people who can input into the questions that may be posed. The Chairperson will open the meeting by setting out the agenda and introducing the personnel involved.

This will be followed by a short presentation by the relative procuring department setting out the aims of the procurement process and expected business benefits. They will then address and discuss the procurement process. If appropriate there can then be a walk round of the facilities/site, e.g. cleaning or waste contracts; otherwise it is straight into a Question and Answer (Q&A) session.

The overriding principle is that the Q&A is not intended as a forum for debate, rather a vehicle for moving the tender process forward in regards to organisations responses. It is perfectly acceptable to take a question and respond after the event with a written response

In holding such an event you must make sure do this in compliance with EU legislation (open, non-discriminatory and transparent). This is applied through the equality of information of questions raised and answers provided being confirmed in writing and sent to all potential tenderers whether they were represented at the meeting or not. This information should be provided no within 6 days after the meeting. Shouldn't this be within 6 days after the meeting?

Purposes and Benefits of Bidder Days

The main benefits and purposes of Bidder Days are as follows:

- Make the tender process uncomplicated and make it more personable (begin to build face-to-face relationship) and build the basis for the greater partnership working with all organisations.
- To familiarise potential providers with the procurement process and provide an overview of the requirements for the tender.
- Describe what is expected of tenders in relation to the areas such as method statements and pricing schedules.

- To make providers aware of the skills and requirement needed to be a competitive bidder.
- The engagement of organisations through questions and answer sessions to enable bidders to contribute to the process.
- Obtain constructive feedback on the intended approach.
- Cost and Time Saving for the procuring body as the briefing session answers the questions that are usually emailed at various times during the tender process.
- Can stimulate follow-up/multiple questions in the Q&A that may not have been asked by organisations without this process.
- Still allows procuring body time to go away and seek responses to unanswered questions and send out to all who have expressed an interest

Example Agenda for Bidders Day

- Introductions
- Brief background to the council's current service/works/product requirements and desires for the future.
- Overview of the tender process and the timescales for the procurement including evaluation criteria and weightings – you can talk to the bidders about different weightings for the method statement questions, etc.
- Questions and Answer session from bidders
- Close

You will need a nominated person to take notes of the Q and A session to help minimise misunderstanding or mistakes. The minutes and any subsequent questions/responses must be kept and circulated to all those bidders who have received the tender documentation or those that subsequently express an interest after the event (receive tender documentation). This must be done within 6 days after the bidders day or the expression of interest.

This document log can act as template that can be sent out at the end of each week with any further subsequent questions raised before the receipt date for tender documentation closes.