

**NORTHERN IRELAND NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE
AUTUMN PROGRAMME 2012**

GENERAL GUIDANCE NOTES ON THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Introduction

These instructions have been issued by the Office for Civil Society (OCS), part of the Cabinet Office. They are designed to ensure that all proposals are given equal and fair consideration. It is important therefore that you provide all the information asked for, in the order and format specified.

Please email NI2012@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk if you have any doubts as to the information required or you have difficulty in providing the information requested. Discussions that are specific to your proposals are not permitted.

Bidders should ensure they have read and fully understood the guidance set out here, and the requirements set out in the NI NCS specification (Annex A) and the timing guidelines for NI NCS 2012 pilots (Annex B) before submitting a proposal.

Bidders are strongly advised to complete the application forms whilst making reference to the “step by step instructions for completing your application forms”.

Timetable for commissioning process

The timetable is provisional and may be subject to change. It will be adhered to by OCS as far as reasonably possible.

3 July – Commissioning launched

27 July – Deadline for proposals 12 noon. Officials will then undertake an assessment of proposals

3 August – Organisations notified of the outcomes of their proposals and lead bidders may be invited to a meeting to discuss their proposal.

Week beginning 6 August – Grant Agreement signed

Submitting multiple proposals

Organisations can only be identified as the lead in one bid. Organisations are free to lead one bid and be a named partner in others.

Withdrawing from the process

If a lead bidder decides not to proceed with its application the application will be considered closed and any other remaining partners cannot submit a proposal.

If a member of a consortium or partnership is considering withdrawing, the lead bidder should contact us for advice on whether the application can proceed. Please email NI2012@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk

Contacting us with queries

Questions on the bidding process can be sent by email to NI2012@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk

Financial background information required with your proposal

The lead organisation should submit the last 2 years' Financial Accounts with their full proposal.

If your organisation is less than 2 years old please submit one copy of any three of the following documents in support of your proposal:

- Parent Company Accounts
- Bankers statements and references
- Accountants' references
- Management Accounts
- Financial projections, including cash flow forecasts
- Details of previous contracts, including contract values
- Capital availability

Bidders should note that accounts may be subject to assessment and health check by accountants. Significant risks flagged through this assessment may result in organisations not proceeding further in the process.

Submitting Proposals

Full proposals should be submitted by email by **noon on Thursday 26 July**. We need to receive both the hard copies and the email version by the noon deadline.

If problems are encountered with emailing your proposal, please contact the Cabinet Office NCS Team on 0207 271 6358.

Please use the checklist on your application form to ensure you have completed all the required template forms and are sending the required financial background information on your lead bidder organisation.

Please send:

One electronic copy: An electronic copy of the written proposal and the completed template forms should be sent to NI2012@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk

Receipt of Bids

Bids will be received up to the time and date stated above. Those received before the due date will be retained, and unopened until then. It is the responsibility of the bidder to ensure that their proposal is emailed by the appointed time. Late bids will not be accepted.

When we receive your bid, you will receive a “confirmation of receipt” by email within 48 hours of us receiving it. If you do not receive a confirmation of receipt by that time you should check that you have sent your proposal to the correct email address. If you did send it to the correct address but have not received a receipt by the stated time, please contact us straightaway and arrange to resend it, otherwise we will not be able to accept it.

The onus is on applicants to prove that a proposal was received before the deadline.

Incomplete Bids

Bids may be rejected if the information asked for is not given at the time of submitting a bid.

Costs and Expenses

Organisations will not be entitled to claim any costs or expenses from Cabinet Office, which you may incur in preparing your bid, whether or not it is successful.

The Grant Negotiation Period

Grant agreement

Draft terms and conditions are included in the application pack. As this is an evolving pilot, the Cabinet Office reserves the right to make changes to this draft agreement before formal grant offers are made (anticipated in August) to take into account any issues identified during the grant negotiation phase.

Financial healthcheck

We will use the financial documents submitted with your application to conduct a financial healthcheck on the lead bidder, and may ask for further information during the grant negotiation period.

Health and safety, safeguarding and insurance

As part of the final screening process, we will ask organisations to provide information about your policies for insurance cover, vetting and security clearing staff. Please ensure that your policies are ready in advance of this request.

Once appointed to deliver a pilot, the successful bidder will be required at a later date to sign a statement on health and safety systems to confirm that the lead organisation and delivery partners will be liable for the delivery of the pilot, that all staff working directly with young people or in other relevant roles have adequate checks in place and that adequate levels of liability insurance are in place.

Confidentiality and press and communications matters

If you are invited to a grant negotiation meeting in July, we will ask that you keep this confidential until we advise you otherwise. These negotiations will be conducted on a 'without prejudice' basis so that either party is free to withdraw at any point.

When we are ready to announce the successful bidder as the appointed provider, the Cabinet Office communications and press team will work with you to prepare a joint announcement and also to consider the wording and timing of any local announcements that you propose to make.

Basis of the Funding Agreement and Period of Funding

We anticipate that the grant agreement will be signed in the week beginning 6th August, to ensure that the selected provider can give the necessary assurances to secure essential bookings. Grant payments will be calculated and staged according to each individual project's agreed budgetary requirements. We anticipate that grant agreements will have concluded by the end of January 2013 to coincide with the end of graduation events.

A Grant Offer letter, the specification documents and a set of Terms and Conditions, will form the basis of the grant agreement between successful bidders and OCS.

Grant relationship

As this is a pilot project, we expect to work with you closely to offer support and monitor progress.

You will be expected to give regular progress reports, (detailed ones on a monthly basis and further weekly and ad hoc updates).

Feedback

We will offer feedback to unsuccessful bidders after conclusion of the bidding process. Details of the timetable for providing feedback will be provided when the outcome of the assessment is communicated to unsuccessful bidders.

Freedom of Information

OCS is committed to open government and to meeting its responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Accordingly, all information submitted to OCS may need to be disclosed in response to a request under the Act. If you consider that any of the information included in your proposal is commercially sensitive, please identify it and explain (in broad terms) what harm may result from disclosure if a request is received and the time period applicable to that sensitivity. You should be aware that, even where you have indicated that information is commercially sensitive, we may still be required to disclose it under the Act if a request is received. Please also note that the receipt of any material marked "confidential" or equivalent by OCS should not be taken to mean that we accept any duty of confidence by virtue of that

marking. If a request is received, we may also be required to disclose details of unsuccessful bidders.

Conclusion

Whilst every endeavour has been made to give bidders an accurate description of the requirements set out, it is crucial that bidders should make their own assessment and propose their own solutions to the requirements set out in the specification, relating both to the methods and resources needed to meet those requirements.