

Republic of Sierra Leone

**Request for Proposals
User Guide**

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Preface

This Request for Proposals is based on an international best practise format. To create a complete bidding document, one of four optional contract formats is attached, depending on the cost of the services and the payment basis for the Services. Use of this RFP is mandatory for all Government funded Consultancy Contracts estimated to cost more than Le25 million equivalent.

Six alternative selection methods are available for the selection of Consultants, to ensure that an appropriate compromise is reached between professional quality of the services supplied and the cost of the services. Although inputs to, or outputs from consultancy services are relatively easy to define, the required quality of services cannot be specified with any certainty. The general competence of the Consultants, their relevant experience, and the quality of the technical proposal submitted, are usually of far greater importance than the simple cost of the services. Advice may be cheap, but good advice is unlikely to be received by selection based on just the lowest price.

Methods of selecting consultants:

- ❑ **Quality and Cost-Based Selection (QCBS)** is the standard method of selection for most consultant services, and uses a merit-point score system. The technical capabilities and experience of the Consultants and Personnel, and the quality of the proposal submitted in response to the Terms of Reference, will receive the major percentage of the total points to be awarded. Only firms whose technical proposals have achieved a minimum technical score will be considered for award of contract. The best compromise between technical quality and cost of the services is often achieved by allocating 80% of the total points to the technical features of the proposal and 20% to the financial score.
- ❑ **Quality Based Selection (QBS)** may be suitable for complex, difficult to define, or highly specialised assignments, where the best expertise available is required without consideration of the price. In this case, only technical proposals are evaluated, with the winning bidder being invited for detailed negotiations to agree the price of the services and the contract.
- ❑ **Fixed Budget Selection (FBS)** may be used when the assignment is simple, can be clearly defined, and there is only a strictly limited budget available for the services. Bidders are invited to submit their best technical proposal within the fixed budget price and award of contract will be made to the highest scoring technical proposal.
- ❑ **Least Cost Selection** is appropriate to select consultants for small value services of a routine nature (audits, simple engineering design or supervision) where well-established practices and professional standards exist. Technical proposals are examined to ensure that they pass a specified minimum technical score. The lowest priced bidder of those passing this minimum technical qualification score will be selected for contract award.
- ❑ Selection based on **Consultant's Qualifications** and **Single Source Selection** are other methods which may occasionally be used but are more appropriate for low value assignments.

Detailed technical evaluation of bids under most of the evaluation methods above can be a lengthy process. Pre-qualification of consultant firms, and short-listing of no more than six qualified firms, is recommended to avoid wasting time on evaluation of the many unqualified proposals which may be received through an open bidding process.

The Request for Proposals may be used for either time-based, or lump sum, payment contracts. Lump sum contracts are suitable when the Terms of Reference for the services, and the outputs to be delivered, can be clearly defined. The main text throughout the RFP refers to time-based assignments under the QCBS method of consultant selection. **Alternative clauses or texts are supplied within the Request for Proposals and this User Guide for use with lump sum contracts and with other methods of selection.**

The wording contained in Section 2, Information to Consultants must be used unchanged. Detailed information and wording specific to each procurement process should be included in Section 1 – Letter of Invitation and Section 3 – Data Sheet and in Section 6 – Terms of Reference. The standard forms to be used by bidders are in Section 4 – Technical Proposal Standard Forms and Section 5 – Financial Proposal Standard Forms.

The relevance of the wording in the RFP must be checked against the requirements of the specific Services to be procured. The following general directions should be observed when using the documents.

- (a) The front cover page of the RFP should be completed with the name of the Client Procuring Entity, the title of the Services, the Procurement Number and the date of issue.
- (b) Guidance notes must not be left in the documents issued, except for the notes within the model forms in Sections 4 and 5 of the RFP, and the model forms and appendices within the selected contract format, where the information is useful for the bidder or Consultant.
- (c) Specific details, such as the “name of the Client” and “address for bid submission,” must be completed in Section 1 – Letter of Invitation and Section 3 – Data Sheet.
- (d) Footnotes or notes in italics included in the Information to Consultants and the Data Sheet, are not part of the text of the document to be issued, although they contain instructions that the Client should strictly follow during preparation.
- (e) Clauses included in this User Guide for the Data Sheet are provided to illustrate the clauses that need to be drafted specifically for each procurement.

Section 1. Invitation

Notes on the Invitation

The Invitation shall be issued as follows:

- 1) Where restricted bidding procedures are being used, to issue the bidding documents to previously pre-qualified and short-listed consultants in the format of the Letter of Invitation document.
- 2) For National and International Competitive Bidding as an advertisement in accordance with the Law, the Regulations and the guidance as given in the Public Procurement Manual,

Advertisements for expressions of interest or for competitive procedures should be in the format prescribed in the Public Procurement Manual. Advertisements must provide sufficient information to enable potential bidders to decide whether to submit an expression of interest or participate in the bidding process. Apart from the essential items listed in the draft format supplied in the Public Procurement Manual, the advertisement should also indicate any important evaluation criteria or qualification requirements (e.g. a requirement for the bidder to have a minimum level of experience in providing similar consulting services).

Letter of Invitation

The information contained in the Letter of Invitation should be consistent with the RFP and the selected contract format, and in particular to the relevant information in the Data Sheet.

Step-by-Step Preparation of a Letter of Invitation

The draft format in the RFP provides the basis for preparation of an appropriate Invitation, and illustrates the general format of an invitation and the major features to be included:

- Name of Consultant:** Enter the name of the short-listed consultant firm;
- Name of Client:** Insert the full name of the Procuring Entity;
- Source of Funds:** Insert the name of the provider of funds (normally “*the Government of Sierra Leone*” or the name of the donor agency where appropriate.);
- Name of Project:** Insert the name or subject of the consulting services (e.g. “*Initial feasibility study on the replacement of Sales Tax by a Value Added Tax system.*”);
- Procurement Number:** Insert the standard identifying number for this procurement;

- ❑ **Short Description of the Assignment:** Provide sufficient information to show the objectives and general scope of the proposed assignment (for example “*A general evaluation of the operation and efficiency of the existing Sales Tax system within the Republic, and comparisons with the potential benefits and drawbacks of replacement by a Value Added Tax system. The assignment is expected to require the services of a team of three widely experienced tax professional staff for a duration of three months.*”);

Indicate either an estimate of the level of key staff inputs (in staff time) required of the consultants or the total budget available, but not both.

- ❑ **Short-listed Consultants:** Insert a list of the names of all short-listed consultants. (Note that it is standard practice to provide this information so that bidders are aware of their competitors. The cost of researching and preparing detailed proposals is an expensive overhead for consultancy firms, and high quality proposals are more likely to be received when bidders can assess the volume and level of competition for the assignment.);
- ❑ **Method of Selection:** Enter the selection method to be used for this assignment. (Normally “*Quality and Cost Based Selection*” but could be any of the other selection methods outlined in this User Guide.)

Note that as a general rule, bid securities are not requested for professional consulting services. If a bid security is requested, this not only casts doubt on the professional standards of the Consultants, but the additional cost of obtaining a bid security is often sufficient for the Consultant to decline to submit a proposal.

Section 2. Information to Consultants

Notes on the Information to Consultants

The Information to Consultants (ITC) provides the information necessary for bidders to prepare bids which are fully responsive to the requirements of the Client. Detailed information is provided on bid submission, bid opening, the bid evaluation procedures to be used, and on the process of contract award.

Note that the Information to Consultants will not form part of any eventual contract.

The text of the Information to Consultants must be used unchanged. Section 3, the Data Sheet, will contain all necessary adjustments and corrections specific to each assignment as required to supplement, amend, or remove the standard provisions stated in Section 2.

The Sub-section “Information to Consultants – Appendix” is only required under Quality-Based Selection, Single-Source Selection and Selection by Qualifications, where further information is required to assist the Client in negotiating fee rates with the consultant. **This Appendix should be deleted for all other methods of selection (Quality and Cost Based Selection, Fixed Budget Selection or Least Cost Selection).**

Agreement governing the performance of the Consultant, payments under the contract, or affecting the risks, rights, and obligations of the parties under the contract is included in the General Conditions of Contract, and/or Special Conditions of Contract of the contract format selected for the specific procurement. Care should be taken to avoid any contradictions between the wording of clauses dealing with the similar subjects in the Information to Consultants, the Data Sheet and the Special Conditions of Contract.

It is important that all persons involved in the preparation of the RFP document are fully aware of the provisions and wording of the Information to Consultants so that any necessary modifications to the ITC Clauses, and the entry of the additional information into the Data Sheet, can be completed efficiently.

Section 3. Data Sheet

Notes on the Data Sheet

The Data Sheet provides detailed information and modifications related to the individual Clauses of the Information to Consultants in Section 2.

The Client must specify in the Data Sheet all required information regarding the Client, the processing of the procurement, and the technical and financial evaluation criteria that will apply to the bids. In preparing Section 3, the following should be recorded in the Data Sheet:

- (a) information required to be entered by the Clauses in the Invitation to Consultants (e.g. the name of the Client, or the deadline for submission of proposals).
- (b) amendments, deletions and supplements to any Clauses in Section 2 as are required for the specific procurement.

Step-by-Step Preparation of the Data Sheet

Each clause of the Information to Consultants should be checked to ensure that all required data is entered in the Data Sheet, and that the text is appropriate for the specific requirement. Where the text of the ITC needs to be expanded, modified or even deleted, this can only be done through the Data Sheet.

The wording of the Clauses in the ITC indicates some of the data and additional information required in the Data Sheet. Where additional detail to supplement or modify the clauses of the ITC is required, this should be added to the Data Sheet. If any Clause or Sub-Clause in the ITC is not required, this may be removed by entry of the ITC Clause or Sub-Clause number and the words “*Not Applicable*” in the Data Sheet.

Any text within in square brackets [] in this User Guide, or in the draft Data Sheet, indicates an instruction to enter the appropriate information.

Action:

ITC Clause 1.1: Insert in the Data Sheet “*ITC Clause 1.1: The name of the Client is [name of the Client]*”

ITC Clause 1.1: Identify the method of selection to be used for the assignment “*ITC Clause 1.1: The method of selection is [name of method]*.”

ITC Clause 1.2: State if both a Technical Proposal and Financial Proposal are required, or a Technical Proposal only. This will depend on the selection method chosen. “*ITC Clause 1.2: Technical and Financial Proposals are requested [or A Technical Proposal only is requested.]*”

ITC Clause 1.2: Give the name and procurement number of the assignment “*ITC Clause 1.2: The name and Procurement Number of the assignment are [assignment name and number].*”

ITC Clause 1.3: Provide details of any phasing of the assignment if required. “*ITC Clause 1.3: The phasing of the assignment is as follows: [insert details of the phasing]*” If there is no phasing, do not make any entry in the Data Sheet.

ITC Clause 1.4: If a pre-bid conference is to be held by the Client, insert full details of the date, time, and location, and the officials to be contacted for additional information. For highly complex assignments a pre-bid conference may be useful to ensure that bidders are fully aware of the Client’s requirements and can be given access to background information. Do not make any entry in the Data Sheet if a pre-bid conference will not be held.

ITC Clause 1.5: If the Client will provide any specific inputs to the project such as the provision of counterpart staff, list these inputs in the Data Sheet “*The Client will provide the following inputs: [insert list of the inputs]*”

ITC Clause 1.7.1: If additional related “downstream” work to follow this assignment is anticipated by the Client and where continuity of the Consultant is desirable, this fact should be mentioned in the Data Sheet as well as indicating any consequent effect on the evaluation of bids. “*ITC Clause 1.7.1: The Client envisages the need for continuity on downstream work and will reflect this in the evaluation of proposals as follows: [provide details of any effect of such related work on the evaluation criteria].*”

ITC Clause 1.11: Enter the Clause numbers within the selected Contract format which relate to fraud and corruption “*ITC Clause 1.11: The clauses on fraud and corruption in the Contract are: [insert document and Clause numbers].*”

ITC Clause 2.1: Indicate the number of days before the date for submission of proposals for bidders to request clarification of the RFP documents, and the address to which requests for clarifications should be sent. “*ITC Clause 2.1: Clarifications may be requested up to [number of days] days before the submission date*”. [Normally 21 days is used when international bidders are involved] “*The address for requesting clarifications is: [address, electronic mail address and facsimile number].*”

ITC Clause 3.1: State the language in which proposals are to be submitted “*ITC Clause 3.1: Proposals should be submitted in the English language.*”

ITC Clause 3.3(i): If shortlisted consultants will be permitted to associate with another shortlisted firm to offer a joint proposal, indicate this in the Data Sheet “*ITC Clause 3.3(i): A shortlisted firm may associate with another shortlisted firm.*” Such associations are not normally permitted since it reduces the competition amongst consultants, but could be appropriate when no single firm of consultants is expected to have all the necessary resources or expertise for the assignment.

ITC Clause 3.3(ii): If this assignment will be on a staff-time basis, enter the Client’s estimate of the professional staff-months required for the assignment “*ITC Clause 3.3(ii): The estimated number of professional staff-months for the assignment is [insert number of man-*

months].” If this is a fixed-budget assignment, give details of the available budget “*ITC Clause 3.3(ii): The Financial Proposal shall not exceed the available budget of [insert amount of budget].*” For other lump-sum payment contracts, no entry is required in the Data Sheet.

ITC Clause 3.3(iv): Insert the minimum required experience of professional staff to be proposed by the Consultant “*ITC Clause 3.3(iv): The minimum required experience of proposed professional staff is: [insert list of job title(s), years experience and specific expertise required].*”

ITC Clause 3.3(vi): Specify the language in which reports shall be submitted “*ITC Clause 3.3(vi): Reports that are required under the assignment shall be in the English language.*” [Delete as appropriate].

ITC Clause 3.4(vii): If training is a specific major component of the assignment, insert in the Data Sheet “*ITC Clause 3.4(vii): Training is a major component of the assignment and Proposals should provide a detailed description of the proposed methodology, staffing and monitoring activities.*”

ITC Clause 3.4(viii): List any additional information to be provided in Technical Proposals “*ITC Clause 3.4(viii): Additional information required in the Technical Proposal is: [give list or state “None”].*”

ITC Clause 3.8: If Financial Proposals are required to state local costs in Leones, insert in the Data Sheet “*ITC Clause 3.8: Consultants are to state local costs in Leones.*”

ITC Clause 3.10: Insert in the Data Sheet the required period of bid validity (normally between 60 and 90 days) following the submission date “*ITC Clause 3.10: Proposals must remain valid for [number of days] days after the submission date.*”

ITC Clause 4.3: Insert the number of copies of the Technical and Financial Proposals to be submitted “*Clause ITC 4.3: Consultants must submit an original and 3 (three) copies of each proposal.*”

ITC Clause 4.4: Insert the address for the submission of proposals “*ITC Clause 4.4: The address for submission of proposals is [full address of the Client].*”

ITC Clause 4.4: If any additional information is required on the outer envelope of the bid, insert in the Data Sheet “*ITC Clause 4.4: Information on the outer envelope should also include: [give list of required additional information].*”

ITC Clause 4.5: Insert the time and date for the submission of proposals “*ITC Clause 4.5: Proposals must be submitted no later than [hours] hours on [date].*”

ITC Clause 5.1: Insert the address for communications to be addressed to the Client “*ITC Clause 5.1: The address for communications to the Client is [address].*”

ITC Clause 5.3: Specify the technical evaluation criteria to be used for this assignment. The actual points should be specified for each criteria and sub-criteria from the within the range of

points given below. The minimum pass mark for technical proposals must also be specified (normally 70%). Insert in the Data Sheet “*ITC Clause 5.3: The number of points to be given under each of the technical evaluation criteria are:*

	<u>Points</u>
(i) Specific experience of the consultants related to the assignment [Insert sub-criteria] [Insert sub-criteria] [Insert sub-criteria]	[0 - 10]
(ii) Adequacy of the proposed work plan and methodology in responding to the Terms of Reference [Insert sub-criteria] [Insert sub-criteria] [Insert sub-criteria]	[20 - 50]
(iii) Qualifications and competence of the key staff for the Assignment [Insert sub-criteria] [Insert sub-criteria] [Insert sub-criteria]	[30 - 60]
(iv) Suitability of the transfer of knowledge program (training) [Insert sub-criteria] [Insert sub-criteria] [Insert sub-criteria]	[0 - 10]
(v) Local participation (as reflected by nationals among key staff presented by foreign and local firms; maximum not to exceed 10 points) [Insert sub-criteria] [Insert sub-criteria] [Insert sub-criteria]	[0 - 10]
Total Points:	100

The number of points to be given under each evaluation sub-criteria for qualifications of staff under (iii) above are:

	<u>Points</u>
(i) General qualifications	[20 - 30]
(ii) Adequacy for the assignment	[50 - 60]
(iii) Experience in region	[10 - 20]
Total Points:	100

The minimum technical score required to pass is [number of points] points.”

ITC Clause 5.7: Specify the currency to which proposals in other currencies will be converted for the purpose of financial evaluation, the source of exchange rates to be used and the date of exchange rates to be used “*ITC Clause 5.7: The single currency for price conversions will be [currency]. The source of official selling rates is [give source – normally ‘The Central Bank of Sierra Leone’]. The date of exchange rates is [date – either the date of proposal submission, or a date not more than 28 days earlier].*”

ITC Clause 5.8: For the evaluation of QCBS Proposals only, the formula for determining financial scores and the relative weightings for technical and financial scores must be stated in the Data Sheet “*ITC Clause 5.8: The formula for determining the financial scores is $S_f = 100 \times F_m/F$ where S_f is the financial score, F_m is the lowest price and F the price of the proposal under consideration.*

The weights given to the technical and Financial Proposals are:

Technical = _____ [Normally between 0.8 and 0.9], and

Financial = _____ [Normally between 0.1 and 0.2]”

ITC Clause 6.1: Insert the address at which any required negotiations with the winning firm will be held “*ITC Clause 6.1: Negotiations will be held at: [address where negotiations with the winning bidder will be held].*

ITC Clause 7.2: Insert the date the assignment is expected to start and the site location “*ITC Clause 7.2: The assignment is expected to commence on [date] at [insert location].*”

Section 4. Technical Proposal – Standard Forms

Notes on the Technical Forms

Section 4 contains the standard forms which are to be completed by the bidder as part of the technical proposal. The Consultant is required to complete and submit these forms pursuant to ITC Clause 3.4 and other requirements of the Request for Proposals:

- 4A. Technical Proposal submission form;
- 4B. Firm's references;
- 4C. Comments and suggestions of consultants on the Terms of Reference and on data, services, and facilities to be provided by the Client;
- 4D. Description of the methodology and work plan for performing the assignment;
- 4E. Team composition and task assignments;
- 4F. Format of curriculum vitae (CV) for proposed professional staff;
- 4G. Time schedule for professional personnel;
- 4H. Activity (work) schedule.

No action is required by the Client on any of the draft formats when issuing the RFP.

Section 5: Financial Proposal – Standard Forms

Notes on the Financial Forms

Section 5 contains the standard forms which are to be completed by the Consultant in submitting the financial proposal, when required pursuant to ITC Clause 1.2. The Consultant is required to complete and submit the following forms pursuant to ITC Clause 3.6 and in accordance with other requirements included in the Request for Proposals:

- 5A. Financial Proposal submission form;
- 5B. Summary of costs;
- 5C. Breakdown of price per activity;
- 5D. Breakdown of remuneration per activity;
- 5E. Reimbursables per activity;
- 5F. Miscellaneous expenses.

No action is required by the Client on any of the draft formats when issuing the RFP.

Section 6. Terms of Reference

Accurate Terms of Reference are essential in the procurement of consultant services to ensure that both the Client and the Consultant are fully aware of the objectives and outputs of the services. Consultant services are expensive, and a lack of careful thought, research and preparation of the Terms of Reference by the Client, may result in considerable wastage of Government funds.

Notes on the Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference (TOR) should provide sufficient information to enable consultants to fully understand the services required by the Client, and to prepare proposals that are realistic and competitive. The Terms of Reference (after joint agreement and inclusion of any minor modifications suggested by the Consultant) will be used to prepare the Appendices or Annexes which form part of the Contract document.

The TOR must be complete, precise, and clear. Incomplete, imprecise, or unclear TOR may force consultants to request clarifications from the Client, or to submit conditional proposals or proposals based on an incorrect understanding of the Client's requirements. Depending on the nature of the clarifications, the Client may need to amend the Request for Proposals and possibly to extend the deadline for submission of proposals. Conditional proposals may have to be rejected. If proposals are not substantially comparable with each other, evaluation may be difficult or impossible, and the procurement may need to be restarted.

The Client should always assign experienced staff to draft the TOR to ensure a clear specification of the scope, tasks and outputs of the services required. When considering Requests for Proposals prior to approval and issue, Procurement Committees should treat TOR as the most important Section for careful review.

Preparation of the Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference will normally contain the following headings:

1. Background;
2. Objectives;
3. Scope of the Services;
4. Transfer of Knowledge/Training (when appropriate);
5. Deliverables;
6. Assignment Reports and Schedule of Reports;
7. Facilities, services and resources to be provided by the Client;
8. Assignment Period;
9. Assignment Management & Administration

Background:

[This should be limited to the necessary general background and introduction to the assignment including overall details of the programme or project which includes this assignment.]

Objectives:

[Specify the objectives of the assignment in clear and unambiguous terms.]

Scope of the Services:

[Define in detail the specific services/duties/activities that the Consultant is expected to perform during the assignment.]

Transfer of Knowledge/Training (when appropriate):

[Include, if appropriate, the level of training or transfer of knowledge activities required by the Consultant. This may include on-the-job training of counterpart staff, training seminars and workshops, or the provision of overseas training facilities.]

Deliverables:

[Detail the specific deliverables (outputs) expected from the Consultant. These will include reports, achievements and other measurable progress indicators. For Lump-Sum contracts key deliverables are often defined for use with a schedule of interim part payments.]

Assignment Reports and Schedule of Reports:

[Specify the reporting requirements and frequency of reports, and where appropriate the structure of Reports required. Avoid specifying unnecessary routine reports, if possible, since these reports can easily distract the Consultant from more productive work for the Client. Note that reports are no substitute for effective personal management of an assignment.]

Facilities, services, and resources to be provided by the Client:

[Detail the nature and extent of facilities that will be made available to the Consultants (office accommodation, equipment, support or counterpart staff, etc.), any services (communication, photocopying, stationery, security, etc.) that will be provided, and any other resources or support that the Client (or the Government) will make available.

Assignment Period:

[State the anticipated period of time that the Assignment will take to complete.]

Management & Administration of the Assignment:

[Detail the management arrangements that will apply to the Consultants during the Assignment (who they will report to, frequency of meetings, etc.).]

Standard Forms of Contract

One of the following standard forms of contract must be attached to the Request for Proposal document:

- Consultant Services - Complex Time-Based Assignments
- Consultant Services - Lump-Sum Assignments
- Small Time-Based Assignments
- Small Lump-Sum Assignments

Selection and attachment of the appropriate contract format must be completed before the Request for Proposals is issued.

It is normally fairly easy to decide whether the Consultant should be paid on a lump-sum or a staff-time basis. Lump-sum contracts are generally preferable whenever there are clearly identified key deliverables required from the assignment. A time-based contract is more appropriate for complex assignments, for technical support services, where deliverables cannot easily be verified by the Client, or are mainly incidental to the services provided.

The small contract formats should only be used for lower value assignments when the assignment is simple and straightforward, and the additional clauses in the longer forms of contract are unnecessary for the protection of either party to the contract.

Once the contract format had been decided, use the appropriate User Guide to prepare the selected contract format.