Introduction to Tendering ebook
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Welcome to Tendering

Hello, and welcome to my Introduction to Tendering guide.

The ability to write a successful tender is, arguably, your most important business skill. It is worth investing the time and energy in learning how to do it properly. It is a skill that you will draw on for all of your working life. But also, your company or your job may depend on your ability to write winning tenders; such is the direction that business is taking. More and more, people and businesses are demanding a fair and transparent means of appointing suppliers. Putting work out to competitive tender is the only way to guarantee fairness and transparency.

A good proposal or tender is not easy to write; and it’s not intuitive. It’s a skill that needs to be learned – often through trial and error. But losing business is often the price of trial and error (more so error). So, it can be a costly way to learn. Reading and using this book should help you reduce the ‘trial and error’ aspect of learning how to write winning tenders.

I make a living by writing successful tenders for people like you. But I also understand that not everyone has the budget to pay a professional writer, or perhaps they just want to do it themselves. I also run Tender Training, so I am well versed in the road-blocks people face when learning to write a tender, and I also have enough experience and success to show you the important things to focus on, as well as how to address them.

This tender guide is designed to walk you the basics of the tender writing process. It provides you with the details of the tender process from start to finish. Getting well-acquainted with the content of this guide will set you on the right path to writing your own tenders.

This guide is a combination of my learnings from the hundreds of tenders I have written, and a condensed version of what I would teach you if you attended one of my training sessions. It is the guide you need to read if, in your professional role, you write, coordinate or contribute to the tender process in some form. Once you have read and digested its contents you will have an actionable road map to writing winning tenders.

Wishing you all the best for your future tenders.

Kristine Daw
Chapter 1

What is a tender?
1 | What is a tender?

A tender is ‘An offer to carry out work, supply goods, or other assets at a stated fixed price.’

Whilst this very formal description of a tender is correct, it is so much more than this and requires an extraordinary investment of time and resources in order to be successful. So, it is the process of making an offer, bid or proposal, or expressing an interest in response to a particular invitation for the supply of goods or services; it is also a platform for your business to illustrate all that you are great at. It is your ‘close up’ moment, so this is why an appropriate strategy is vital. If you fail to capitalise on the opportunity, you may not get another chance; at least not for a while. Competitive tenders are often a three-year event, so it is in your interests to submit your best offer.

Government departments and private organisations use tendering to seek business responses to particular needs they have. Once they have received the responses, they evaluate them and select an offer that meets their needs and provides the best value for money.

Tendering has become a standard practice in business. It provides a formal framework to source goods and services in a fair and equitable environment, bound by probity and transparency.

Lodging a competitive tender is one thing, but submitting a winning tender relies on careful preparation and an understanding of the tendering process.

Many companies will simply answer the questions, provide a technical description and submit a price. Your winning bid needs to differentiate your offer from that of the competition and this book will show you how to do it.

Terms Used in Tendering

Tender documents can take on various names. Here are the commonly used ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EOI</th>
<th>Expression of Interest</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expression of Interest (EOI) is a proposal in which a supplier details their interest in providing specific goods or services for an organisation. This may be in response to an Invitation to Register (ITR) or Request for Information (RFI).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RFI</th>
<th>Request for Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Request for Information (RFI) is the initial step in the procurement process, where the client (or Agency) requests general information from suppliers about their organisation. An RFI can lead to an RFQ or RFP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RFP</strong></td>
<td>Request for Proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RFQ</strong></td>
<td>Request for Quotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RFT</strong></td>
<td>Request for Tender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other common terms used in the tendering process:

| **Agency/Client** | This is the tendering organisation; sometimes referred to as the buyer or client. |
| **Bid** | An offer made by a seller to a buyer. A bid is often a term used instead of offer. |
| **Free Format** | A free format response is when the Agency has not defined a structure for vendors to respond to. The free format provides an opportunity for the vendor to expand on their capabilities, professionalism and experience. |
| **Tender** | Another term for bid. |
| **Tenderer** | The Tenderer is the organisation bidding for work; sometimes referred to as the supplier or respondent. |
Chapter 2

Understanding the Process
2 | Understanding the Process

The important steps in the tender process are as follows:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>REQUEST FOR TENDER IS PREPARED</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>TENDERS ARE RELEASED</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>REGISTER INTEREST</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>ATTEND INFORMATION SESSIONS</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>RESPOND TO THE TENDER</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>NOTIFICATION AND DEBRIEFING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>CONTRACTS AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Request for tender is prepared

The Request for Tender (RFT) outlines what is required, the contractual requirements and how you should respond. It will include information such as:

- Tender conditions
- An explanation of the evaluation criteria to be used when evaluating the tenders received
- Closing time, date and lodgement of tenders
- The mandatory requirements of the tender
- The tender specifications that detail the product, service or works required; the specification may include plans and schedules of the work required
- Conditions of Contract
- Tender Response Schedules.

Tenders are released

There are several different ways tender documents can be released.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tendering Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open tendering</td>
<td>These tenders are made public through advertising or tender notification services. There are no restrictions placed on who can submit a tender; however, suppliers are required to submit all required information and are evaluated against the selection criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select tendering</td>
<td>A select tender is only open to a select number of suppliers. The suppliers may be short-listed from an open tender or be a compilation of businesses that the organisation has worked with previously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-stage tendering</td>
<td>Multi-stage tendering is used when there are a large number of respondents. At each stage in the process, the suppliers are culled to those who are most suited to the specific contract requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited tendering</td>
<td>An organisation contacts a select number of suppliers directly and requests them to perform the contract. It is generally used for specialist work, emergency situations or for low value, low risk and off-the-shelf options.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Register your interest

You will need to register your interest in submitting a tender. Instructions for registering your interest are usually found in the tender documents. Follow the instructions provided to register your interest, as different organisations have different ways of doing things. This important step will ensure you are told about tender information sessions and receive
answers to any questions asked about the tender. And remember, they may change the
tender documents, so make sure you read all your emails regarding the tender.

**Attend tender information sessions**

Monitor the tender website for updates on the tender and try to attend any information
sessions offered. These are valuable opportunities to ask questions and make contact with
the agency. Issues may come up in these sessions that you may have deemed as not
important or were not stand-out issues for you. These sessions are also excellent
networking opportunities. They may give you a chance to meet potential sub-contractors or
make contacts that could participate in a joint venture.

**Respond to the tender**

It may sound obvious, but you must ensure that you have thoroughly read each section of
the RFT. It’s surprising how many people don’t do this and then wonder why they didn’t win
the business. Spending extra time on this early step will ensure you have not missed
anything, but there may be areas, such as the Conditions of Contract, that will help you
identify ways that you can ‘value-add’, which will help make your offering more competitive.

Make a note of all the extra requirements, e.g. reference letters, insurance certificates,
Health and Safety manuals.

It is important to note the delivery method (in person, in a tender box, electronic, etc.) and
how many copies need to be provided.

Do not wait until the closing date to submit your response! This happens more often than it
should and the last thing you want is to invest valuable resources in your submission, only
to waste your effort by missing the deadline. Also, be aware of time differences between
states and territories.

Once you have made a decision to tender, it’s time to get into action! Grab a copy of the
tender documents and begin the preparation process. Once you have received the RFT
documents, it’s important that the tender team you have put together evaluate the
documents to provide a perspective from different areas of the organisation.

The next step is to prepare your tender proposal. This includes planning, writing,
developing, polishing and refining it. Be clear about your structure and propositions. Decide
on several key propositions you can use to set your tender apart. If you are not a strong
writer, seek the services of someone who is. Engage a proof-reader to review your tender.

If you need to present your offer to an evaluation panel, stay focused on the key messages
in your proposal. Most importantly - prepare. Plan your presentation carefully, rehearse
and, if you don’t feel you’re a strong presenter, get some coaching in presentation skills.
Things to Keep in Mind When Planning Your Response

Evaluation and selection
Tenders are usually evaluated by a tender evaluation committee. As a first step, each tender will be checked for compliance with the tender documents, tender conditions and specifications. This is where the nitty-gritty comes in to it – if you haven’t read the tender documents thoroughly and addressed all the requirements, it will be evident at this point.

If it is compliant it will be evaluated against the criteria specified in the tender documentation. The tender that has the best offering, which includes value for money, also demonstrates the successful delivery of goods and services, and value add will win the business. Remember, value for money does not necessarily mean the lowest price.

Notification and debriefing
When a contract has been awarded, the successful tenderer will be advised in writing of the outcome.

Unsuccessful tenderers are also advised and are usually offered an opportunity to debrief. I would urge you to take up this opportunity; feedback from the evaluation panel could be invaluable in preparing your next tender. It is a great way to improve your next bid.

Address concerns and complaints
If you have concerns or complaints about the tender process, first raise your issues with the agency concerned. Communicate your issues reasonably and professionally. You can always contact your small business representative in your state, or Ombudsman. Finally, if you remain unsatisfied with these processes, you can seek legal advice.

Contracts and Project Implementation
Generally, a formal agreement will be required between the successful tenderer and the Agency. The contract comprises all information provided to and by the successful tenderer. These include:

- Conditions of Tender
- Specifications, including any plans and other attachments
- Standard Conditions of Contract.

The contract will outline the responsibilities of the contractor and the government agency. Payment will be made at the completion of the contract or as outlined in the payment schedule. It is wise to have your contract looked at by a legal representative before you sign. While you may be buoyed about winning the work, ensure that you are not signing your life away or the life of your organisation, by signing a contract that hasn’t been checked.
Understand the payment terms
If you win the tender, make sure you are aware of the payment schedule. If it is a government organisation, payment schedules vary from agency to agency. You may not get paid as soon as the job is finished or goods are delivered. If you require payment immediately, specify this in your contract.

Information Gathering
Gathering information is another essential element in the tendering process and is an ongoing task for all members of the tender team. Information should be gathered for the duration of the tender process. You will need to conduct an initial meeting and you should also consider the following:

- Is this a new tender or an extension of an existing contract?
- Who is currently providing the services?
- Do you have a relationship with the incumbent?
- Have you identified your own strengths and weaknesses?
- Have you identified your point-of-difference to your competitors and your valued-added services by offering a creative and innovative service or product?
- Are you able to meet the mandatory criteria?
- Are you able to meet the implementation period?
- What are the evaluation criteria for the tender?
- What is the cost of preparing this tender?

Once you have gathered the information, you will need to make a preliminary decision as to whether your company can win the contract alone, whether you will need to form a consortium, or whether there simply isn’t any point in submitting a response.

What best describes a tender response?

a) A company profile
b) A capability statement
c) A solution document
d) A pricing document
e) A marketing document
Chapter 3

Should I tender?
Should I tender?

The first step in the tender process is to determine if you will submit a response to the tender. There is much to consider when making this decision. It is important to determine if it is worth responding to the tender, as the process can be time consuming and requires an investment of resources that cannot be recouped if there is no chance of winning the business.

It is tempting to pursue every bid that presents itself, but it can often be a false economy. As the resources involved in producing a worthy response are significant – and if your response is not up to standard – you could potentially do more damage to your brand, than if you decline to respond. This is why it is just as important to know when NOT to bid, as knowing when to bid.

This ‘bid or no bid’ matrix may be useful in guiding you through your decision making, when determining whether to respond to the tender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Should I Bid or Not?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Is the tender aligned with your core strategy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is this opportunity aligned with your company’s strategic plan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do you have a good chance of winning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are you the incumbent or the competition?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If NO – Do you have a strategic plan to address this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>How well do you know the client?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are you clear on their goals, strategic direction and competitor relationships?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If NO – can you find this out prior to the tender?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Can you fulfil the contract requirements?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you have the right skills, experience and volume of staff?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If NO – Can you assemble the appropriate team/experience prior to the commencement of the contract?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Do you have a commitment from management for the bid?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are your senior managers committing to the bid?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you have the appropriate resources?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You need to act quickly when making this decision, it is important not to waste time pondering the decision when you could be working on the response. Delaying the decision will give your competitors an immediate advantage and will place unnecessary pressure on the response team if you do go ahead with a response. Call a Bid or No Bid meeting and ensure you have reached your decision by the end of the meeting.

Some key questions that will ensure you make the right decision:

1. **Does the project fit with your core business strategy?**
   - If the opportunity does not align with your organisation’s strategic plan, it is not worth responding to. It is easy to lose focus when you see a potential opportunity. However, it is more important to focus your energy and resources on opportunities that are relevant to your business and will ultimately help grow your business.

   **Write down your company’s core business strategy.**

2. **Do you have a realistic chance of winning?**
   - Only respond to a tender where you believe there is a legitimate chance of winning. Firstly, consider if this is an existing contract. Secondly, are you the incumbent? If not, is the incumbent performing well. Good performing incumbents win tenders more often than not.
   - Do you know your competitors’ strengths and weaknesses? Do you have a compelling competitive advantage over your competitors?
What is your company’s strengths and weaknesses?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

What is your company’s strengths and weaknesses?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

3. Do you understand your client’s goals, issues and biases?
   - You must consider what your client is seeking. Without understanding this key information, you will not be able to tailor a response that illustrates that you can meet their needs.

Who are your major competitors?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________
Chapter 4

Before you start writing
Before you start writing

Establish a Team

Completing a successful tender can take a lot of time and resources. When you have received a tender, establish a team that is jointly responsible for delivering the tender.

Establish the roles and responsibilities of each team member and calculate the budget you need to prepare the tender. Next, work out how that budget will be allocated to the team members. Doing this with the evaluation criteria and weighting in mind will help you work out where it is important to invest your resources.

Define the personnel in each of the departments of the organisation who will be able to assist you with the tender. These may include:

- Management – marketing and/or management team
- Technical – operations staff, product specialists or engineers
- Pricing – Accountant or Finance Manager.

It is important to divide the project into sections and allocate tasks to key personnel who have the knowledge and ability to make informed decisions on each project section.

Develop a timeline that includes all the tasks that need to be completed and by which date, to ensure you make the deadline. Also, list the approximate hours required to put together the tender. Decide whether it can be prepared in-house within the time-frame or whether you need to outsource some aspects.

Some tenders offer a briefing session. If appropriate, send some of your key team members to the session. They can be quite valuable and provide insightful information to the tendering organisation.

Planning your Response

There are many factors in preparing a tender, so planning your response is essential. Whilst you may be able to meet the mandatory requirements, supporting documentation can also be essential to your submission.

- List all the tender requirements from the RFT documents.
- Do you require product samples? How many do you need?
- Is a statutory declaration required?
- Are you required to provide a letter of financial support from your financial institution or your accountant?
- What supporting documentation is required?
• Do you need reference letters?
• Do you have current insurance certificates?
• We recommend using a checklist to ensure you have received all the information you require.

Make a tender checklist

Develop a tender checklist and make sure you stick to it. When developing the checklist, work backwards from the due date.

A project worksheet is helpful to ensure that you have identified important requirements i.e. due date, format, number of copies, mailing address and required supporting documentation.

Things to remember and include in your checklist:

• What date is it due?
• What time is it due?
• Where do I have to submit the documents?
• How many copies do I need?
• Is it electronic or hard copy submission?
• Is a statutory declaration is required? Make sure you leave yourself sufficient time to get this completed.
• Leave enough time if you have to post or have a courier deliver the document.
• Allow plenty of time for printing and binding your response.

The checklist is an important tool for you to use. It will allow you to easily access the key information of a tender, without having to review pages of tender information.
## Example – Tender Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tendering to:</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tender n°:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due Date:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory Meeting?</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission format / requirements:</td>
<td>□ Hardcopy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Copies:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address for Lodgement:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result Expected:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required to use existing format?</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory Declaration?</td>
<td>□ YES □ NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents to submit:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td>6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envelope/submission to be marked:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Read the tender thoroughly

All the documents that are part of the RFT should be read thoroughly. Make notes in order to understand the key criteria and mandatory requirements.

Check if there is a specified format that you must use. It is important to read the instructions and understand the format you need to use for your response. An RFT will often use a strict response format so the Agency can easily compare each submission. Changing the response format may result in your disqualification in the tender process.

Using your own format - Some RFTs do not specify a response format, or they can be often general or unspecific. If you are unsure of the tender structure you should use, you will need to develop a framework that suits your offering.

Example – Unspecified Tender Format

- Executive Summary
- Organisation Structure and Key Personnel
- Experience and Capabilities
- References
- Financial and Insurance details
- Response to the Tender Specifications
- Customer Service
- Reporting
- Business Continuity
- Sub-Contractors
- Value-Added Services
- Quality Assurance
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Environmental Management System
- Pricing.

Conditions of the Contract

The conditions of the contract specify how the services will be delivered from a legal and contractive perspective. If you are able to, work with a legal representative to get advice on the contract. It is also important to understand all the conditions and if these will affect your business, if you are awarded the contract. Take note of warranties, guarantees, and any statutory requirements.
Example – Conditions of the Contract

It is essential to read through the entire contract, as it may contain statements of work required, which you may not conform to, or which might have an impact on the company’s operations and profitability.

For example: “Tenderers must provide 24/7 and 365 days per year customer service and deliver all products within two hours of the request being made”.

OR: “Tenderers must have certified systems in place for their Quality Management, Environmental Management and Occupational Health and Safety systems in place.”

Statement of Work or Specifications

This provides the detail on the description of the products and/or services and the requirements around the delivery. The specifications will detail items such as quantity, timeframe, quality and location. You need to meet these requirements to submit a conforming and compliant tender.

- Determine areas of non-compliance and perform an analysis on how this may affect your ability to deliver the products or services.
- You may have an alternative tender to present that provides a better offer.
- Use a checklist to work out your ability to deliver the specifications.

Remember, you must be able to deliver on mandatory requirements. If you can't, you may be eliminated from the process.

Supporting Documentation

There is often a requirement to attach company policies, procedures and supporting records to demonstrate your ability to deliver the services/products. List all the supporting documentation that you will need. If you don’t have the required supporting documentation, visit www.docuhub.com.au. This website has been designed to assist businesses in the preparation of tenders and has hundreds of easy to customise documents at a reasonable price.

Asking Questions

During the tender process you may require clarification or additional information on some of the tender requirements. Use the Conditions of Tender document, which will detail the process. It is important to note the date when the Agency will stop responding to questions, which is often several days prior to the closing date.
Clarifications can include:

- Specific details on the specifications
- Inconsistencies in the documents.

It is important to remember, when asking your questions, that they are often publicly available on the agency’s website and other organisations will have the opportunity to view your questions. Do not include information pertaining to your solution!

- Do not use your organisations name, it shows your competitors that you are interested in this contract.
- Do not provide context for your question.
- Be clear and concise and refer to the relevant section using the numbering system.

**Conflicts of Interest**

If you believe a conflict of interest exists, then seek legal advice and consider your position very carefully before submitting a response.

It is very important to assess your organisation’s position regarding actual or potential conflicts of interest.

This may include financial or relationship issues.

**Competition**

An essential part of your undertaking is to understand your key competitors and what they will offer. Examine your competition and consider this task as part of your response.

- Which competitors pose a threat to your success?
- What is their pricing strategy, if you’re competitive in the market place?
- What value added services will they bring to the contract?
- Can you stand against your competitors in a competitive bid?
5 | Your Response

Things to Remember about Your Response

It is worth noting when drafting tender responses that the evaluators will often comprise of a panel of people or teams from different areas of the Agency. They may be instructed to assess only specific sections of the response and may be required to look at their section independently. References back to other sections of the document are not advised, and if absolutely necessary, they should include the full number and heading of the referring section.

Responses are evaluated according to whether they succinctly and completely address the defined Evaluation Criteria. Any extra narrative will only cloud the relevant information. Do not add more information than is required, no matter how tempting it is to include everything you possibly can.

Try to include elements of the question in the response. This also helps ensure you are on track and have addressed the criteria required.

At all times you should substantiate any claims of previous experience or capability with evidence or examples.

The Submission Letter

The submission letter is a polite yet informal introduction to the Agency of your company, your offer, and your aims for the partnership. It provides the Agency with a point of reference for further contact. It equates to the cover letter for a job application. This is not the place to introduce new information but rather it provides you with one last opportunity to briefly summarise why the Agency should choose you over everyone else. Whilst tenders can sometimes be formal and dry, the submission letter allows for a more personable and unpretentious expression.

You may want to include some of the following information.

- One or two paragraphs summarising your qualifications and your ability to meet the Agency’s requirements will immediately tell the panel that your organisation is a contender.
- State that you have submitted a conforming tender.
- Outline the benefits of your offer to the Agency, including any outstanding value-added services, superior aspects of customer service or competitive pricing elements.
- Put forward your best-selling argument, then reinforce all those selling points one more time! Tell your Agency once again why they should be doing business with you and not your competition.
• End the letter by thanking them for the opportunity to tender and provide your contact details for any further questions. Sign off the letter with ‘Kind regards’, including your full name and position title, and don’t forget to sign your name.

Example – Sample Submission Letter

Dear Mr. Rogers,

RE: Project Handbook for ABCD

Dawtek is pleased to submit a proposal for the provision of writing and editing services for ABCD.

With extensive government experience, Dawtek provides a wide variety of end-user documentation, technical documents and business-focused communications. Our documentation services include a variety of authoring, editing, form-design, copywriting, consulting, proposal-development and report-writing services for electronic and print media.

Strong industry and corporate knowledge, an experienced team and an extensive portfolio – including previous work with government departments – ensures that Dawtek is in an ideal position to provide an outstanding quality of writing services to ABCD.

Dawtek provides a flexible and efficient service delivery, which is continually striving for service improvement and customer satisfaction. We offer ABCD:

Professional staff – who are appropriately trained and sensitive to the environment they are working in, with a detailed understanding of the ABCD requirements.

Technology – the latest technology and equipment to manage our services and an extensive range of customised reports.

Dedicated Contract Manager – a Contract Manager who is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to service any request from the Department.

Expert Knowledge and Assistance – providing writing and editing solutions is our core business and the Department will benefit from over 20 years of knowledge and experience.

Industry Developments – Dawtek consistently monitors industry developments to ensure that we offer ‘best practice’ at all times.

We thank you for taking the time to consider our application and we believe that you will find Dawtek perfectly suited to providing the services that you require. Please contact me if you require any further information or if you have any questions.

Regards,

[Signature]

Kristine Daw
Managing Director – Dawtek
Cover Page

Your cover page is the first part of your submission that the Agency sees, so it’s extremely important that you present yourself in a professional manner.

Items to include on the cover page:

- Your company’s logo
- Images related to your services and your industry
- The Agency’s company name and contact details
- Date
- Delivery address
- Tender reference number
- Title Description of Tender

Use the cover page to create an impact and make an impression. If you don’t have the tools to do this, contact a graphic designer or purchase some images to use.

Table of Contents

If the document is over 10 pages in length, it is important to include a Table of Contents. This makes it easier for people to read and reference the information in your submission.

It also provides the reader with a snap shot of your submission and the contents you have provided. Be reminded that the structure of the tender might be defined by the format required. However, if you have a free format, then it provides you with the scope to use headings which tell the Agency about your organisation, but also key words which meet the required criteria.

Executive Summary

The Executive Summary should be the final written task because you can then summarise the elements of your entire response. The length should be a minimum of two to three paragraphs and no longer than one page.

- Introduce your company, and briefly describe its structure/history.
- If space permits, briefly list management personnel and their relevant experience.
- Describe primary clients, products and services.
- Describe relevant experience.
- Describe the main positive attributes of your customer service – how do you attract new clients and retain existing clients?
- Describe your aims for the proposed relationship with the Agency.
Try to include ‘win themes’, for example ‘we offer faster delivery, lower risk, better environmental outcomes…’. Tailor your win themes to the solutions that the Agency are looking for.

The final sentence or paragraph should be a summary of why the Agency should choose your company over the competition. Concentrate on capability, experience, resources, value added services and your price offering.

**Your Details**

Your details are also an important part of the tender. They provide the Agency with a quick snapshot of your company’s details and also who to contact for further information.

A ‘Tenderer Details’ page is quite common in most tenders. Make sure all the information is accurate and relevant as this information can be used to conduct credit and financial assessments on your company.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company name:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACN:</td>
<td>ABN:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trading Address:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone Number:</td>
<td>Fax Number:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Person:</td>
<td>Phone Number:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td>Website:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**About your Company**

A company profile reflects the size and capability of your business. After pricing, this is the most important part of any tender submission. If the evaluator is not convinced your company has the capacity or experience to deliver the required product or service, you will be eliminated. Scoring of tenders will often score price and technical capability as equally important.

Including this information provides the Agency with insight into your organisation and the products and services you offer. Information to include in this section can include:

- Company history, including the years of operation.
- Why was your company formed? What is the vision of your company?
- Who are the directors and what is your management structure?
- How many staff do you employ?
• What products and services are you offering and what are the key features and benefits?
• What is your Location and demographics of your region/area? How many offices do you have?
• Accreditation or Quality Assurance (if applicable).
• A general statement of overall capacity and experience to provide goods and services (why people should do business with you).
• What awards has your company won?
• List all your company achievements.
• List your professional memberships and affiliations.

In addition, some Requests for Tender require the following information, which may be included in your company profile (although many of these items are typically requested in specific parts of the tender response):

• Business objectives and/or mission statement
• A list of current, as well as major clients and the industries you service
• Technology solution
• Customer service
• Commitment to environmental sustainability, health and safety
• Business continuity
• Pricing structure and offering.

To include a full company profile would be out of the scope of the response, but you could provide this as supporting documentation.

**Organisation Structure**

Supply an organisational chart that details your proposed organisational structure for the provision of goods and services for which you are tendering.

The company structure should show the relationship between managers and staff. If you have several offices located in different areas it could be beneficial to provide an organisation chart for each office as well as one for the entire organisation.

Also, highlight the benefits of your organisational structure and what this structure will mean for your client. Such as contract management, reporting authorities and clear lines of communication.
Key Personnel

Your prospective client not only needs to have confidence in your company as a whole, they also need to be convinced that your key team members have the experience and skills to effectively look after their needs.

Your personnel are an essential element of your solution; they are going to be the people that deliver the products and services. Highlight the key personnel that will be involved in the contract and provide the Agency with an overview of each person. Where possible, try to include a photograph of each team member, it adds a personalised view of your company.

To support this information, attach a CV for each key person, or provide details on their experience and what their roles and responsibilities will be for the duration of the contract. In a CV some of the things you can include are:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Area of expertise
- Results achieved
- Educational qualifications
- Photograph

Contract Representative

It is a good idea to nominate one person who is the contract representative. This person should have the authority to make decisions about this contract, respond to queries and negotiate terms and details with the Agency.

Provide the details of the Contract Representative in a table format so it is very clear who will be leading the team and in charge of the contract.

Provision of Personnel

In many cases, it will be necessary for your company to recruit and / or train personnel specifically to deliver the contracted services or materials. In these cases, it is important to describe just how you will get the right people with the right skills in place on time.

If your company will be required to recruit a large number of new staff or contractors, proactively address this issue.
Subcontractors

In some cases (more often with large, complex contracts), some element of the contracted service or product will be provided by subcontractors working for your company. In these instances, it is very important that you provide supporting information that gives the client assurance that the use of subcontractors will not jeopardise your ability to deliver the contracted goods or services. In particular, they will want satisfactory assurance that:

- your company will take full accountability to ensure that all the contract deliverables on the contract are fulfilled;
- any subcontractors involved in your bid have the skills, experience, and capacity to deliver their piece; and
- that your company has in place appropriate mechanisms to control and manage subcontractors.

In the case of “commodity” services (e.g., skip hire), it is not necessary to have contacted a subcontractor in advance. In these cases, merely demonstrating that you have experience working with these types of companies is usually sufficient.

In the case of specialty subcontractors (e.g., asbestos removalists), it is preferable to have already contacted your subcontractor, to confirm pricing, availability, and the contractor’s ability to conform to the terms of the contract.

Capability and Experience

To be competitive in the tender process you need to demonstrate your capability and experience. Include a client list in your response. Agencies are mainly interested in seeing the clients you have that are in similar industries or sectors as theirs and that are of a similar size, so categorise your client list. As a list of clients can be quite lengthy, include client logos as images as they can be more noticeable. You will need to obtain approval from your client, to use their logo in your documentation.

To set yourself apart from your competitors, another option is to provide a summary table of similar clients and the products and services you have delivered.

Current and Previous Work

It is important to demonstrate that you have had experience in delivering similar products and services on the same scale as those required by the specifications.

Include a summary of three to five previous and current clients who are relevant to the tender contract. Include only contracts of a similar size, value or nature to this tender and provide details about each contract such as:
• The length of the contract
• A detailed description of the products and services you provided
• The benefits and outcomes of your service delivery
• If possible, include the tangible benefits to the client. For example, ‘our services saved our client $150,000 over two years due to the implementation of an online system’.

Presented in a summary table makes the information easy to read and access.

**Product and Specifications**

If you are selling a product, you need to demonstrate its ability to meet the requirements of the Agency and also to distinguish that your products are superior to your competitors. Include a product brochure or manual to highlight your range and the specifications.

**Guarantee and Warranty**

Always include your policy on product guarantee and product warranty. What is the duration of the guarantee and warranty and what, if any, terms are associated with them.

**References and Testimonials**

The most powerful way to boost your credibility, and therefore your sales, are to use the best possible referees, testimonials and case studies you have.

The best way to substantiate your service offering is to provide real, first-hand information on customer’s experiences.

When using testimonials or quotations from your customers, make sure they are real! Other things to include are:

• Give each testimonial a headline
• Include the full name, position and company of the person giving the testimonial
• Make them powerful and succinct
• Include only the most powerful points relevant to your services.

**Financial Viability**

If your product, service or company is technologically advanced, this is your opportunity to sell that benefit. Explain your technology systems and provide screen shots of the easy to use system.
Most Agencies want to ensure your company has the financial capacity to deliver the services. To support your financial ability, you may be asked to include the following information:

- Copies of your financial records for the past two to three years. If you are a new organisation, then provide the financial information that you have available
- Contact details of your bank or financial institution
- A letter from your accountant, attesting to the financial profitability of your organisation
- A risk report.

**Ability to Service the Contract**

The Agency wants to feel secure that you have the resources, facilities and infrastructure in place to service the requirements of the RFT.

A section is often included in the selection criteria to determine your capabilities to service the contract. Information to address that specification can include:

- Systems and suppliers you have in place to guarantee supply
- Current capacity utilisation
- Opportunity to extend/adapt premises or expand to different locations
- Access to skilled resources
- Financial viability to fund company expansion
- Disaster recovery and business contingency plans
- Technology and tools to provide the services
- Communication and customer service strategies.

**Pricing**

The pricing model submitted with your tender response represents the value for money the Agency will receive from your offer. Remember that the lowest price is not always the successful tender as the Agency will also need to be comfortable with your capability and credibility.

Sometimes you may be able (within the prescribed framework) to offer a selection of different pricing models. You should outline the value of each model to the Agency. When calculating your cost, make sure you factor in direct and indirect costs such as:

- Labour and salary costs
- Overhead costs
- Materials
• Supplies
• Maintenance
• Travel
• Profit margin/mark-up.

When detailing your pricing, make sure that you note any assumptions made, such as inclusion or exclusion of GST.

If a fixed price is required for the life of the contract, it is important that you take into account such variables as CPI increases, changes in legislation which will affect wages or increases in raw material costs. If there are any additional expenses, such as travel time, it is important to note down these costs.

A proposed payment plan may be detailed in the Conditions of Tender or Conditions of Contract. If not, you should outline your proposal for progress payments, milestones and percentage of contract price to be made as final payment.

A discount for early payment is worth considering as an inclusion in your pricing plan. Discounts can be offered if payments for products and services are made within so many days, dependent on the volume of products or the size of the project. When comparing tender responses, the Agency will take any discounts offered into consideration.

**Insurances**

Insurances provide the guarantee that you have the appropriate cover to deliver your products and services.

Some Agencies will request a specific limit of coverage. If you don’t currently have that amount of coverage, it is important to make a statement to that effect. Also include certificates of insurance to support your claim.

These are the standard insurances requested by most RFTs. If there are other applicable insurances, include them as well.

**Quality Assurance**

Quality Assurance is a requirement in most RFTs; it shows that you have processes in place to manage the output of your products and services.

If quality assurance is mandatory and you don’t have it, then you may want to consider submitting a joint tender with another organisation who holds appropriate certifications.

If quality assurance is not a mandatory requirement, then mention the quality processes you have implemented within your company and what benefits these processes will bring to the Agency.
If you do have a quality assurance certification it is important to include a copy of the certificate in the attachments section and also mention the QA process you go through in delivering the service. Such information can include:

- Provide an overview of your Quality Management system
- What standards your organisation conform to, e.g. ISO-9001
- Detail staff recruitment, induction and retention procedures
- Describe your client governance framework. This is an overview of the systems, processes and methods, which you use to provide your goods and services.

**Health and Safety Management**

The health, safety and welfare of your employees and clients are essential to your service delivery.

Indicate if you hold any external certifications such as Safety Map, NSCA 5-Star System, Construction Policy Steering Committee, Premium Discount Scheme and the level of certification for your Health and Safety Management System if you have been accredited.

It is easy to say you have implemented Health and Safety policies and procedures; however, it is important to provide evidence to support this. We recommend that you provide a copy of your Occupational Health and Safety Management System and/or Policies and Procedures Manual. If the document is large in size, at a minimum, provide a copy of the manual’s Table of Contents.

**Commitment to the Environment**

Changes to our environment have resulted in the Government and private organisations being committed to helping protect the environment. Therefore, if you have implemented environmental practices or have environmentally friendly products and your pricing structure is still competitive, it will give you an edge over your competitors.

If you do have measures in place, and ‘environment’ isn’t one of the selection criteria, include a section on your environmental policy somewhere in your response that is appropriate. If your company has an environmental policy, then include it as one of the supporting documents.

**Innovation**

Innovation is essential to any winning submission. This criterion enables you to detail what your products and services are ahead of your competitors and what your company offers the Agency. Innovation is not just using technology; it is about using new ideas and new methods. This section provides you with the scope to explain your creative or more effective products, processes, services, technologies or ideas and what values this
provides the agency. Values or cost efficiencies can be seen over the short and long term. Also, don’t forget to mention the innovative ideas that you will be implementing during the contractual agreement. You can show the Agency if you continually adapt your products and services to changes in the market place, advances in technology and most of all best practice.

Attachments

In the attachments section you can include important supporting documents that help substantiate your submission. Remember to include only enough items to support your claims. Don’t stack your document with irrelevant information as this may go against you in the evaluation process.

List your attachments in the table of contents and give each one a title. Place them in the proposal document in order of importance. Include things like:

- Relevant certificates
- Diagrams and maps
- Registration details
- Glossary of terms
- Materials list
- Photographic evidence of results achieved
- Press clippings
- Testimonial letters
- White papers
- Project plans
- Organisational chart
- Frequently asked questions.

Many tenders require information about your organisation’s documented management policies and procedures. You need to be able to show the Agency that you, as a potential supplier, do not pose any unnecessary risk as a result of poor business or safety practices, lack of experience, financial instability, environmental issues, or quality/reliability issues. Through the tender response, the Agency must be assured that you fully understand their business and the needs of the contract as well as eliminating all areas of perceived risk from an unproven supplier.
Chapter 6

Common Mistakes
6 | Common Mistakes

There are several common mistakes that people make when submitting tenders. The more experienced you are with tenders, the less you will make these mistakes. Try not to fall at the last post, and check all your submissions to make sure you’re not inadvertently making these errors. The common mistakes when preparing a tender submission are:

- Talking/writing in the third person. When writing a tender submission you should always write in the first person, for example ‘We are a leading writing company with over 10 years’ experience’. Do not use ‘I’ there is no ‘I’ in team!
- When making statements about your capabilities ensure that you can substantiate your statement. Whatever claims you make about your organisation – always provide evidence. If you don’t your submission will come across as puffery and will not be taken seriously.
- The use of negative statements for example, ‘A schedule for the reporting and acquittal of funds will be included in the work plan to ensure regular monitoring and oversight.’
- Not being forthright and honest about any gaps in your company’s capabilities. Talking around gaps will raise questions about the rest of your submission. You are better off stating the facts, but outlining a plan of action that will overcome the gaps.
- Don’t be afraid to include examples of work you’ve done outside of the specific field in question, but try relating this experience to the demands of the RFT.
- Keeping descriptions succinct. As proud as you are of the work you’re doing on other contracts, always try to ensure you get the maximum amount of relevant information across with the minimum number of words. This is an art, so do not be afraid to ask others to help with the wording.
- Inconsistency in spelling/grammar.
- Inconsistency in details, e.g. number of years’ experience, number of offices and locations.
- Lengthy narratives in response to questions but do not completely address the evaluation criteria.
- Assuming the evaluator knows your business or industry.
- Not completing required checklists or checkboxes.
- Not providing all the required supporting documentation.
- Simple errors in delivery, e.g. not providing an electronic copy of the tender as well as two printed copies.
Summary

A tender submission should be concise, relevant and demonstrate your organisation’s ability to deliver tender outcomes. It should:

- Be packaged and presented clearly and with a visual impact to impress the panel because it is easy to read and therefore, easy to evaluate.
- Contain key personnel profiles that highlight their qualifications and capability to fulfil the tender contract.
- Substantiate your claims against the tender criteria, proving you can deliver the tender contract.
- Identify and substantiate "value-added" services to make your company competitive.
- Conform to the tender submission requirements.

Remember to substantiate your claims when writing your tender response. Keep in mind throughout the tender process the key components of a winning submission are:

| Compliance | A compliant solution meets all the Agency’s requirements and specifications regardless of the model or value and the price. A compliant solution will meet the first round of evaluations and potentially will be shortlisted. The key to a compliant solution is to address all the mandatory criteria and ensure you comply with the tender response format and the requirements. |
| Customer orientated | A customer-focused, personable solution that reflects the Agency’s culture and requirements. Demonstrate your ability to be an extension of the Agency’s business, provide customer service that extends outside of normal business hours and be able to respond to ad-hoc requirements. |
| Innovative | An innovative but cost-effective solution that can deliver all the requirements of the tender, in a way that has not been delivered before will make your response stand out. Highlight your solutions, whether it is through the use of cutting-edge technology, commitments to the environment, or the ability to deliver superior products and services faster than your competitor. |
| Value adds | Value for money is essential in every solution. Show the buyer the value they receive when using your products or services. Why is your solution more attractive? Even the smallest detail can make a huge difference, so include all the benefits of your services that don’t carry any extra costs but provide both short-term and long-term value. |
The key to any winning tender is the attention to detail. The evaluators will be considering every part of your offering; what may seem insignificant to you may sway an evaluator for or against your organisation. Be sure that the important aspects are not undermined by small details that haven’t had enough focus. The key is to pay special attention to every aspect of the tender, no matter how small.

Each tender response is unique, but one thing that remains constant is the time, effort and attention to detail required to write a great business proposal. If you remember this at each phase of the process, you’ll already be one step ahead of your competitors.

**Good luck** in your tender preparation and submission.