

COMMON ERRORS MADE BY VOL SECTOR ORGANISATIONS IN TENDER SUBMISSIONS

1. Shoddy Layout

Nothing causes the annoyance of evaluators more than being presented with a tender submission that is disorganised and/or badly referenced. This means that the evaluator has to wade through many pages of documents in search of information regarding the provision of the service being tendered. Apart from being time consuming this tends to lead the evaluator to conclude that the provision of the service would be similarly disorganised and to award a low score.

2. Failure to read the Instructions for Tendering properly

This is allied to Point 1. Most good tender packs give clear instructions as to how the tender should be structured, i.e.

- a) Form of Tender and other mandatory Forms
- b) Pricing Schedule
- c) Method Statements
- d) Policies & Procedures.

Too often the documents submitted are not presented in the order required and are often intermixed with other irrelevant documents. This again leads to unnecessary waste of time and annoyance. On the other hand a well organised and referenced tender creates a favourable impression in the mind of the evaluator.

3. Failure to read the Specification properly

To state the obvious, the Specification describes the Service we wish to commission. Some organisations seem to have failed to read the Specification properly, if at all and describe a service that bears little resemblance to the one we have specified.

4. Inadequate Method Statements

It is common practice nowadays to require tenderers to complete Method Statements giving details of how various elements of the Service will be delivered, e.g.

- a) Implementation and Resourcing of Contract
- b) Workforce
- c) Service Delivery and Outcomes
- d) Individulaised Budgets/Direct payments
- e) Quality Assurance
- f) Equality and Diversity

g) Environmental Impacts

Guidance is always given to tenderers as to the information we are seeking in these Statements, such as “How the tenderer will recruit, train and supervise Support Workers and Volunteers to ensure the smooth running of the service and meet the best interests of Service Users”.

Some organisations seem to ignore this guidance and describe something, often at inordinate length, that we did not ask for. What we are looking for is a clear and concise statement of how what we are looking for will be achieved. We try to provide as much information as we can, without writing the Statement ourselves, as to the information we are seeking and it is annoying when this is apparently ignored.

5. Failure to address the Outcomes Required

Required Outcomes are normally detailed in the body of the Specification and common guidance on Method Statements is “describe how the tenderer would achieve the Required Outcomes as set out in the Specification”, often with a specific reference to the relevant clause in the Specification. It is surprising how often tenderers fail to address these issues and in the process lose the majority of the twenty points available.

6. Being too verbose

Advice is always given as to how many pages of A4 paper should be used for each Method Statement. This advice is often ignored and novelettes produced where one side of A4 would have sufficed. Evaluators are tempted to skim through these pages and valuable information can be missed solely because it was hidden in a mass of verbiage. It is often better to use Bullet Points to illustrate a point being made.

7. Use of material used for other tenders

Organisations often use material that they have produced for other tenders and try to adapt it to fit the current tender. Evaluators are quick to spot these regurgitations and tend to mark down tenders where they are used.

8. Use of written Policies and Procedures

Some organisations seem to believe that the mere production of their written Policies and Procedures is sufficient to describe how a particular requirement will be achieved. It is not. If we need to see particular Policies we will say so. A clear and concise description of how a particular

Policy will be implemented in the delivery of the Service is what is required.

9. One final (personal) niggle

The use of plastic folders to contain documents within a Ring Binder drives me to distraction. Tenderers should use file dividers properly referenced so that the relevant documents are readily accessible. The best tenders are those that have a contents page at the front of the tender showing where documents can be found and preferably in the order given in the Instructions for Tenderers.

The wording in this document is from Mary Crawford (details below). The views here do not represent those of London Borough of Hounslow or NHS Hounslow and do not apply to all volunteer and community sector organisations. The purpose of the document is to provide guidance for voluntary and community sector organisations that are exploring tendering.

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