

The Engagement Gateway Pre qualification questionnaire



Questions and answers

Q1. At launch events, there were a specific number of participants mentioned at the three levels. Have these numbers changed?

A. The numbers of beneficiaries per level indicated at the launch events were meant only as a guide. We will not specify in our Invitations to Tender (ITT) how many participants/outcomes we wish you to provide. You will be expected to indicate in your tender submission how many participants you expect to reach with your proposal and to demonstrate value for money.

Q2. If the organisation compiling the PQQ is a local branch of a national organisation, what level of information is required (organisationally) for the PQQ?

A. As much information as possible, again with breakdown for local activity where this is specific to the project. Local information whenever possible (local staff and project activity) linked with the larger organisational structure/charter/memorandum and articles.

Q3. What are the contract lengths at each level, and when the Engagement Gateway programme comes to end, will this affect contract length?

A. The Engagement Gateway programme will be awarding contracts until 2011. All contracts will be for two years from when they are signed, regardless of the date they were awarded.

Q4. Are tenders different from Invitation to Tender (ITT)?

A. An Invitation to Tender is the standardised document sent by WCVA to organisations that are part of the approved suppliers list. The tender is the information provided by the organisation giving details of their proposal and supporting information in response.

Q5. Where do the tenders come from and how many will there be?

A. Development of Invitations to Tender will involve three factors; firstly local advisors will be placed within each local authority area to co-ordinate and understand what activity is taking place in that locality. The second is the project board which will have members from a variety of backgrounds both in a geographical and sector knowledge sense. The third part to this

process is the approved suppliers list; this information will show what organisations are available in what areas and what client groups they want to target.

We envisage across the three levels and lifetime of the project that in the region of 500 to 600 contracts will be awarded.

Q6. Will ITTs be targeted?

A. Invitations to Tender will come in many forms; some will target specific areas, some will target specific client groups and as the project progresses will we release more specific ITTs which are aimed at plugging gaps in the provision which is taking place.

Q7. Contract start dates - is there any scope for negotiation regarding the start date (say to allow for staff recruitment before project activity starts)?

A. Usually starts from when the contract is signed, however there could be some negotiation before the contract is signed.

Q8. Regarding Q19 of PQQ - previous grants and contracts, is this an early declaration/indication of match funding? Also, if these previous grants and contract represent very small amounts, is this declared?

A. No, this is not an early indication of match funding, they are just references letting us know who we can contact to verify the information you have provided. Grants of any size are applicable in this section.

Q9. Can you enter in as a consortium/partnership? Can you act as an umbrella body and sub-contract in smaller organisations?

A. Each organisation needs to fill in a PQQ if they want to work together to deliver a project, they can tell us in the response to the Invitation to Tender if they wish to work in a consortium/partnership. A larger organisation may act as an umbrella body for smaller organisations. The sub-contracted groups will not have to be part of the approved supplier list; however the organisation that signs the contract will be ultimately responsible for the delivery of the outcomes required.

Q10. Do PQQs get assessed as you go along? Is there any reason for handing the PQQ in before the deadline?

A. The PQQs will be assessed as they come in, but assessment decisions will not be made public until after the closing date.

Q11. Is it paid in arrears?

A. Contract negotiations will take place once an organisation has been successful; part of this process is to agree on a payment profile which will be linked to the achievement of milestones/outcomes. There will also be scope to agree an advance payment.

Q12. When does match funding have to be in place? What if you don't have the match funding in place when you receive an ITT?

A. As part of the tender submission you will be required to demonstrate how much match funding you can supply along with the source(s) of this funding. How much match you can contribute will be a part of the process in evaluating what tender responses demonstrate the best value for money.

Q13. Is State Aid an issue?

A. State Aid is a complex and important issue which WCVA monitors closely in any EU Structural funds work it undertakes. The competitive procurement process being undertaken for the Engagement Gateway does negate some of the issues around State Aid but WCVA will continuously monitor the work it is undertaking to ensure State Aid rules are not broken.

Q14. Do you have to be a member of WCVA to apply?

A. No, it is open to everyone.

Q15. Can WCVA be a reference?

A. Yes, if you have received funding or grants from WCVA in the past then please do state us as a reference.

Q16. Is there a limit on the number of people on the approved suppliers list?

A. There is no limit to the number of organisations who can join our approved suppliers list, all those that meet our eligibility criteria and score at least 60 per cent in the scored questions with their submitted PQQ will enter on to our approved suppliers list.

Q17. Is the PQQ scored?

A. As indicated in the PQQ Guidance document the PQQ is assessed by using a two stage process. Firstly the submission is checked to ensure all of our eligibility criteria have been met and that all requested information and documents have been provided, once this stage has been passed the scored questions will be marked and a weighted score for each question is then awarded. PQQs need to meet all of our eligibility criteria and score a minimum of 60 per cent to be successful in joining the approved suppliers list.

Q18. Can you send project ideas into WCVA?

A. No, Invitations to Tender will not be based on recommendations from organisations.

Q19. Will double funding be a problem for beneficiaries?

A. Beneficiaries or participants as they are now called under the Convergence programme can be on more than one ESF project at a time, what cannot be double counted though is the output or outcome they achieve. If for example a participant achieves a NVQ Level 2 qualification only one project could claim that output as 'theirs'

Q20. Can a project run from level 1 to level 2 consecutively?

A. Yes, there is nothing to stop an organisation moving up through the levels of funding; it does however depend on applicable Invitations to Tender being release by WCVA which will be based on need for delivery and not on the need of individual organisations.

Q21. With a PQQ submission date of May 15th 2009 it will not be possible for audited accounts from the 2008/2009 financial year to be available for submission, what should I submit instead?

A. If you are unable to submit audited accounts for 08/09 because they have not been finalised yet then we will accept the audited accounts from 07/08 with the management accounts from 08/09 .

Q22. Given that tenders will be rolled out on a geographic or thematic basis, will there be an opportunity to tender for all-Wales work with a specific target group?

A. WCVA will release tenders that fit best with the need that is identified through the processes being put in place this may or may not include all-Wales wide tender specifications.

Q23. The organisation I work for would like to know if we prove that we have two distinctly different avenues of approach to educating, promoting and advancing NEET'S are we able to put in two tenders simultaneously.

A. Each tender may include a number of 'lots'. If for example a tender specification has 10 lots then an organisation will only be able to win one contract from that tender specification. However, organisations will be free to win more than one contract from different tenders that are released, as long as they can demonstrate they have the resources to do so.

Q24. Page three says that if any responses are inadequate, then the PQQ will be excluded from this stage. If the PQQ is submitted well before the closing date, will it be assessed upon receipt, and if so, would there be the opportunity to resubmit before the closing date, rather than wait until the next opportunity or will you be assessing all applications after the closing date has expired?

A. The tendering process that we are going through is open, fair and competitive which means we cannot give anyone a direct advantage over other applicants. This means in practice that if your PQQ does not meet our eligibility criteria and does not gain a weighted score of 60 per cent or above then you will not be able to re-submit against this PQQ.

Q25. Page 5: as all requests for clarification or further information have to be via email, can you confirm the timescale for responding to requests, so that applicants may time their bids accordingly?

A. WCVA will endeavor to post a response to questions as soon as possible but the technicality of some questions may mean we have to seek guidance which would delay any response. Therefore, we cannot commit to a timescale for response to questions.

Q26. Page 6: you state: 'please keep to the word limit on each question' - there is no word limit stated for any of the questions - do you mean that the boxes are not to be made larger? Or is there a limit which has been omitted? Also if there is not a limit and the boxes must stay the same size - what size font can be submitted as obviously the smaller the font the more information can be crammed into a box?

A. This is a mistake on our behalf; we did have agreed word limits but in the process of posting the PQQ these did not get added to the final document. As this is our error we will not discount any response due to length of reply but we would ask everyone to submit no more than 1 A4 page of text with a font size of 10 for each written answer.

Q27. The level 2 and 3 funding brackets say you can use the money to employ full time staff, can you use level 1 funding to employ part-time staff?

A. As long as expenditure is allowed under ESF rules (e.g. no expenditure on large capital outlay) then that is fine, how you spend the money is up to you as the contract is based on results, not expenditure like grants.

Q28. Is the total £29m funding divided up into set 'pots' of money per region or county for projects?

A. No, the project is demand led so the money will be divided up according to need which is informed by applicants demonstration of need, as well as communication with CVCs and other groups with local knowledge. This will be constantly evaluated and tenders put out based on where money needs to be spent.

Comment: So will good projects be considered purely on their merits?

A. We will try to be as flexible as possible, if tenders in one round doesn't address what you are looking to do then tenders in subsequent rounds may be better suited to your organisation.

Q29. Can you clarify the age category for the 'young people' target group?

A. 16-25, although important to note that young people must be economically inactive or unemployed to be eligible participants.

Q30. Would you use community links from PQQ?

A. Yes to some extent this could be used by CVCs to advise on organisations looking to work in partnership, but important to remember that the PQQ application is for your organisation and you need to demonstrate your own experience.

Q31. If as an organisation you work with one group but are looking in the future to work with a number of other groups what is best to put on the application?

A. You can do that but you have to be able to explain yourself (your understanding of the need of groups you look to work with in the future etc). It is possibly better to keep your application more focused if you can only demonstrate working with certain groups.

Q32. Organisations obviously need to demonstrate their understanding of target groups needs and their experience of working with them, which questions give the opportunity to do so?

A. Questions 12 and 13 give the opportunity for organisations to demonstrate this.

Q33. With supporting documents how much evidence do you want?

A. The PQQ and PQQ Guidance documents detail the supporting evidence we need, the amount you need to supply is dependant on the type of organisation you are. **If all the documents which are applicable to your organisation are not supplied then you will not meet our eligibility criteria and thus not pass on to the approved suppliers list.**

Q34. I would like clarification for outputs required for level 1 and 2 funding: are there likely to be general recommended numbers as a guideline?

A. Tender responses will be judged on a value for money basis so it is important that organisations thoroughly work through how many participants/outputs/outcomes they can provide for the value of contract on offer. WCVA will look at the participants being targeted and make a judgement based on value for money, i.e. if an organisation is targeting participants with greater needs then the amount of participants/outputs/outcomes they can provide will be less than an organisation which is targeting participants with needs that aren't so great. More guidance will be provided with the Invitations to Tender.

Q35. Social enterprises will arguably find it more difficult to gather match funding, is there flexibility with this?

A. At Levels 2 and 3 match funding will be required but all organisations including social enterprises can use income, reserves, project generated income or in-kind volunteers time as eligible match funding.

Q36. If you are a social enterprise can you use the project to generate income?

A. If an organisation is successfully awarded a contract and part of the project plan is the generation of income from the project activity then WCVA will work with that organisation, in conjunction with WEFO, to put systems in place so that the income generated can be used as match funding, where match funding is being sought as part of that contract. This is obviously subject to conditions, approval and individual circumstances and will form part of the contract management discussions when appropriate.

Q37. How will you measure hard and soft outcomes?

A. These two sets of outcomes are measured in different ways, hard outcomes are the easiest to measure, record and evidence as they typically involve the participant gaining a qualification or entering employment and as such the evidence is easily quantifiable and

available. With soft outcomes this process is more difficult but not impossible, to find out more please visit -

http://www.wcva.org.uk/images_client/publication/K11%20-%20Soft%20Outcomes1.doc

or

[www.wefo.wales.gov.uk/resource/Soft Outcomes Leavers Study E7217.pdf](http://www.wefo.wales.gov.uk/resource/Soft_Outcomes_Leavers_Study_E7217.pdf)

At both the PQQ and tender response stage detailing your systems for tracking and evidencing the achievements of participants is an important part of the assessment. WCVA will also work closely with contracted organisations to help put systems in place to gather evidence for both hard and soft outcomes.

Q38. If I am applying for other sources of funds does Gateway need to know about that?

A. Not necessarily, an organisation could be delivering projects for other schemes at the same time.

Q39. Could supplier organisations receiving level 2 and 3 funding be subject to WEFO audit due to match funding?

A. Yes, systems need to be robust so that if required by WEFO a full audit trail can be shown. WCVA will provide support and assistance through the contract management process to help organisations meet the audit requirements.

Q40. The PQQ guidelines say WCVA may run credit checks on the organisation and trustees, when would this be the case?

A. We would need to run checks if organisations have mentioned on PQQ that they have not fulfilled obligations to creditors etc, and may check with larger contracts (£90,000+) as we have agreed to do so. It is only in extreme circumstances that we would run credit checks on trustees, and we would enquire with the organisation before doing this, but we reserve the right to do it if necessary.

Q41. Presumably although economically inactive groups are the target of the scheme they must want to be active to be eligible participants?

A. The theme is about getting people into sustainable employment, aiming to work with those who want to move into employment rather than say older people who are retired and want to remain so.

Q42. For beneficiaries of activities would there be sanctions/penalties if people referred onto projects refused to take up activities (e.g. young person being referred but not turning up).

A. No, although may need to look at reasons why this is happening and re-negotiate the contract.

Q43. Groups working with younger children would surely need to have a child protection policy, do you submit this with your PQQ application?

A. As this is not relevant to all applicants it will be addressed at the tender stage rather than the PQQ stage e.g. tenders aimed at specific groups may require specific policies or documents.

Q44. Does match funding have to be directly linked to the activity being undertaken?

A. Yes, match funding does need to be directly linked to the project activity being undertaken.

Q45. Would a large body e.g. a local authority have to supply its full accounts if looking to register for a small part of a project?

A. If discrete accounts can be identified and verified by audit then no, but if this cannot be achieved then full accounts will need to be provided.

Q46. In the first year how many contracts will be awarded?

A. There is no set figure or target for how many contracts there will be in the first year or through the lifetime of the project. However it is thought that somewhere in the region of 500 to 600 contracts will be awarded throughout the project lifetime. WCVA will be working hard to release contracting opportunities on a rolling basis once the approved suppliers list has formulated.

Q47. Where do you get participant referrals from? Does it have to be statutory bodies?

A. For an organisation to successfully become part of the approved supplier list they will need to demonstrate through their Pre Qualification Questionnaire submission what local links to other organisations/programmes/projects/networks they have and will be able to use if they were to be awarded a contract. Having these contacts and associations will be vital in both gaining access to eligible participants and also being able to move participants on to the next stage in their development once they have achieved their pre-established goals with your organisation. Referrals made or received can come from any type of organisation; it does not have to be a statutory body.

Q48. Currently I am a sole trader but I am in the process of setting up a Social Enterprise. Even though we are in the process of writing our business plan would we be able to apply to go on the approved suppliers list?

A. Anyone can apply to join the approved suppliers list by submitting a PQQ, but to successfully join the approved suppliers list an organisation needs to meet all of our eligibility criteria, this includes providing all the backing documents as detailed in the PQQ and PQQ guidance. Not being able to provide all of the information requested would result in the organisation not being successful in joining the approved suppliers list. The PQQ process has been designed so as to not exclude new organisations from joining the approved suppliers list, but those organisations who are at more of an embryonic stage may struggle to provide all the information to meet our eligibility criteria.

At some point in the future there will be another opportunity for organisations to join the approved suppliers list but the timeframe for this has not yet been decided.

Q49. Enquiry regarding actual ceiling of the fund/what is the real maximum amount available for contracts taking into account match funding: Will there be contracts for £300,000 with half this being match funded or will highest contracts be £150,000 with half this being match funded (so actual maximum amount available is £75,000)?

A. The maximum contract amount available including match is £150,000 over a two year period, this value of project would therefore receive a total of around £75,000 in European Social Fund monies.