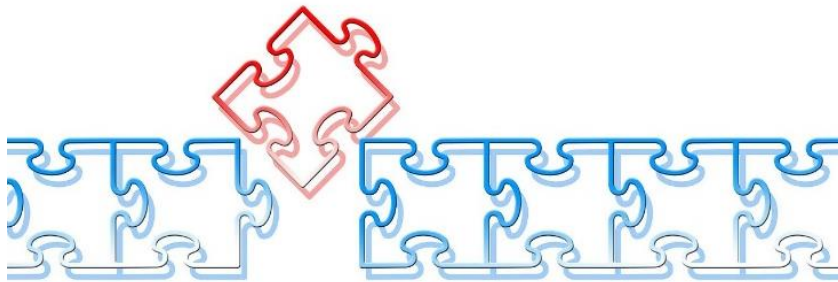


The Supply Chain Network - Making Opportunities, Visible, Accessible and Winnable!**Clarification questions- a fundamental component of successful tendering**

An effective procurement exercise will include the clarification procedure as a crucial component of the tender process. As a bidder, this procedure enables you to raise clarification questions (CQs) about the opportunity you're bidding for so that you can fully understand the procurement process, specification requirements and any aspect of the contract delivery.

A key purpose of CQs is to reduce risks by filling any information gaps. Responses to CQs should help you understand the tender's requirements and also the forthcoming contract's requirements more easily.



The clarification process embeds transparency and fairness in the tender process timetable since the buyer's responses to each bidder's CQs are circulated to all bidders. However, as a bidder there are key principles that you should accommodate to ensure you maximise the benefit of the clarification process. By following these principles, you'll not only gain the broadest information available about the opportunity you're bidding for, but will also be able to continuously review your potential to produce a winning bid and deliver the contract effectively following contract award.

Key principles for using the CQ process effectively.

1. Each tender will define the CQ process. Never try to circumvent or by-pass the process or you may risk being eliminated from the tender process.
2. Check ALL tender documents received early. They may contain errors (including formula errors which may prevent a pricing spreadsheet from working properly). Use the CQ process to politely highlight any errors as soon as you identify them.
3. Each question will take time for the buyer to consider and respond to. The sooner you raise questions, the sooner a reply will be sent so that you can get on with your bid having been appropriately informed (late responses to late questions may mean that you have to rewrite responses that you've already written).

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4. Always read ALL documents to check the answer to your proposed question is not stated in the tender's instructions and / or has been previously answered in another bidder's CQ.
5. Don't be afraid to ask questions about an aspect of the specification, qualification requirements or terms and conditions which, after you have considered it in depth, may seem unnecessarily onerous. In such cases, always propose an alternative for the buyer to consider (sometimes requirements in tenders are inherited from previously released tenders, and the buyer may have either not noticed a condition or accept that a condition is inappropriate - or even wholly unnecessary).
6. Sometimes tenders are released with very a loose scope/specification. This can mean that bidders submit very different proposals, and one bidder may win simply because they produce a basic, cheap proposal. If a buyer is unspecific about their requirements, always raise CQs to clarify the exact requirement so that bidders are bidding on a fair, like-for-like basis. This will ensure that your competitor bidders are bidding - and pricing - on the same requirement as you.
7. Ensure you word each CQ clearly and succinctly. Failure to do so may result in the buyer misunderstanding your question so that you then face further delays when you have to raise the question, reworded, again to get the information you are seeking. If you have several questions, raise each question in a numbered list so that the buyer can refer to each numbered question in their responses.
8. Do not identify yourself or your business in your CQs. This gives away information to competitors and may allow them to get clues about how you're approaching your bid. If you have a commercially sensitive question, consider raising a confidential CQ (marked 'Commercial in Confidence'), ensuring that the question can be appropriately justified as needing confidential handling.
9. Ensure you monitor and circulate all responses to all CQs promptly as they are released by the buyer. Information released about the tender can sometimes be a game-changer that may make you revise your approach to the opportunity or even reconsider the likelihood of you winning the contract.
10. Keep monitoring information released by the buyer! Sometimes information is released without any bidder having raised a CQ about an area of the procurement. This includes notification of an extension to the tender timetable. This may change your bid / no bid decision by giving you sufficient time to produce a high quality bid when you previously assessed that your business could not produce a strong bid in the original bid timetable.

CQs: overall benefits

The CQ process enables bidders to gain fuller and clearer information about the tender and supply requirement. This enables them to make informed risk / reward decisions about the opportunity. Bidders should use CQs as a tool in their bid armoury that helps



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them weigh up risk - and not be afraid to withdraw from opportunities where an unacceptable level of risk cannot be eliminated through the use of CQs.

Opportunities where a bidder can proceed confidently with a true picture of the buyer's requirements - as confirmed by responses to CQs - will be those where the win potential is highest and supply capability is likely to meet or exceed the buyer's requirements.

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