



How to make the most of the HCA Multidisciplinary Framework

The HCA Multidisciplinary Panel provides public sector bodies with a quick and efficient way of procuring high quality, good value development-related services for projects of all sizes.

With free access to a panel of 17 consultants, all with long track records in complex public projects, the process is a lot smoother and faster than OJEU procurement. Here's how it works.

1 Check you are eligible

The framework is available to most public sector bodies across England, including local authorities, central government departments, government agencies and NHS trusts. The HCA has no involvement in the running of other organisations' projects – it merely selects the teams on the framework.

Registration is very simple – and free. You then check you're happy with the HCA contract and sign an access agreement. Once received, the HCA will give you log-in details to a secure website that contains all the information you need to use the panel. This can all be done in 24 hours.

2 Have confidence in the panel's track record

The framework was set up to simplify the onerous process of administering OJEU tenders by pre-qualifying a panel of 17 organisations. These teams have already been through a rigorous OJEU-compliant checking process – with a particular focus on the quality of their work and their ability to deal with complex projects. There is still a mini-competition process for larger projects (see below), but procurement is generally more efficient, far quicker, and therefore cheaper than other routes.

The panel offers good value: all panel members have to provide a set of competitively tendered rates. These are the highest they can use on work procured through the framework.



Tybalds Estate Regeneration

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3 Choose the company that's right for you

The framework doesn't limit you simply to a choice of multidisciplinary giants, although they're well represented if you need them. The panel includes small and medium sized firms too, underpinned by experienced teams of subconsultants, who may be able to provide greater focus and flexibility to a particular project. Such teams can 'mix and match' their members to bring together the best skills to suit each project, with a single point of contact reporting to the client so it's just as straightforward.

4 Keep briefs short – but specific

For work valued below £10,000, you can simply select a panel member and invite them to submit a proposal. For work over £10,000 and up to the threshold for OJEU procurement (about £155,000), you can invite three panel members to bid. For higher-value work, the next step is a two-stage mini-competition.

This can be completed in a matter of weeks – the emphasis really is on 'mini' but it pays to do the groundwork. First, send a sifting brief to all panel members. A good brief will be short but specific: it should allow consultants who are potentially interested to differentiate themselves from one another. The HCA can help you prepare .

The timetable for responses should be no more than two weeks – and panel members know how to respond quickly. You might get responses from all 17 or from a few, depending on your project.

The next step is to draw up a shortlist of no more than five companies and issue a more detailed tender brief. This should include details of the approach to be taken, programme, key staff and lump-sum fixed fee. It should take about six weeks from issuing the brief to receiving and evaluating responses – which is pretty speedy for a large-scale project.

5 Make yourself as accessible as possible

It is up to each public sector organisation how they wish to run the tender. Some operate it solely through a tendering portal. We recommend, though, that you make yourself available to answer questions from consultants before the tender deadline, ideally through a meeting or phone calls and not solely through questions submitted through a portal. This enables consultants to really understand your project and improves the quality of responses you get.



Development Land Consultancy, Bolsover

Further information

Click link below to find out more:

- The Tybalds and Bourne Estates

Contact

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“The best sifting brief asks questions that get to the heart of what your project is all about. It gets to the nub of the issue.”

“You control the project, the same way as any other project. The HCA doesn't get involved in the tender or evaluation process.”