

Independently-funded news consortia pilots: process for selection of providers

1. The process to choose the pilot organisations and regions will be run as a structured procurement process. Whilst the nature of the services means that we are not required to follow the *full* formal EU procurement process, we are required to follow the principles of value for money, fairness, openness and transparency, and we will base our process on what is known as the ‘competitive dialogue’ procedure in public procurement terminology.
2. This means that we will firstly issue a pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) to interested parties, and use the responses to select a small number of the most capable potential providers for each of the three contracts. We will then engage in a period of dialogue and consultation with those organisations. This will help to clarify the services that they may offer, identify any issues or constraints, and define the nature of the ultimate contract. We will then ask for final proposals from each potential provider, evaluate those, and select a provider for each of Scotland, an English region, and Wales.
3. We welcome expressions of interest from consortia (groups of organisations). There is no mandatory form or legal structure for such consortia; however, it is essential that we understand from PQQ stage exactly which specific entity we will ultimately contract with. That may be a new vehicle – a ‘special purpose vehicle’ or similar – or an existing organisation, but its financial strength and credibility will be assessed at PQQ stage. This is an important part of the evaluation process. In terms of assessing other aspects of capability and capacity, we will evaluate the sum total of the organisations within the consortium, subject to satisfactory evidence that the consortium members are committed to the venture. We may test how the consortium plans to work together at proposal stage.
4. We have published evaluation criteria with the PQQ. We will be focusing on:
 - Overall cost and value for money
 - Management strength and processes (inc. consortium working, staff management)
 - Depth and breadth of the service offered
 - Relevance to and understanding of regional issues, culture and opportunities
 - Strength and credibility of the proposal for delivery including aspects such as:
 - Journalistic / news gathering
 - Creativity and innovation
 - Multi-platform approach
 - Technical management
5. Evaluation will be carried out by an expert panel, including representatives from broadcasting and journalism, and based on a pre-agreed structured process. Additional assurance to the evaluation process will be provided by a public sector procurement expert, who will assist on design of the process, moderate the panel scoring process, and ensure the panel work within the principles outlined above. At each stage, we will share information about our processes with potential bidders so they are well informed about our requirements and how we are working.
6. We expect to be in a position to announce which potential providers will go through to the second stage in mid-January. At that point we will issue an Invitation to Participate in Dialogue (ITPD), setting out in

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greater detail the requirements for provision in the IFNC pilot areas and explaining the criteria we will use to identify the winning bidders.

7. The table below shows the timeline for the process and gives further detail around what will be taking place at each stage of the process.

DATE	ACTIVITY	COMMENTS
26 th November 2009	Issue advertisement and PQQ; interested parties register interest.	Pre-qualification will focus largely on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial standing / capacity • Capability and capacity, particularly in journalism, technical broadcasting / wider media skills, creative, management and marketing skills • Probity and professional standing
30 th December Noon deadline	Return of completed PQQs	The process for evaluating PQQs will be made public. Evaluation will be carried out by the Panel (see above). We will select 2-4 organisations for each pilot area to take forward to the next stage.
12 th January	Issue short listed organisations with 'invitation to participate in dialogue'	Organisations need to ensure appropriate staff are available for the January – February 'dialogue' period.
19 th January	Deadline for outline responses to ITPD	These will be used as the basis for the dialogue phase
25 th January	Dialogue phase	Dialogues will be structured and the process will ensure fair treatment of all bidders.
19 th February	Issue of 'invitation to submit final tender'	The specification and instructions to bidders will be based on the outputs and learning from the dialogue period.
3 rd March	Deadline for submission of final proposal	The overall selection will be made on the basis of 'most economically advantageous tender' – in effect, best value for money.
March	Final evaluation period inc. interviews with bidding organisations	The evaluation panel will score the proposals based on a pre-agreed and structured process, and will if required meet with the bidders to gain further clarity around their proposals.
Late March	Announcement of preferred bidders	A preferred organisation for each of the three contracts will be announced; there may be one or more 'reserve' bidders.
April / May	Final contractual discussions	Preferred bidders will engage with DCMS in order to finalise contracts.
May	Contract award	
Summer 2010	Start of service	