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Contract

Specialist Science and Contingency Services

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

F03: Contract award notice

Notice identifier: 2025/S 000-016174

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocids-h6vhtk-05057a

Published 22 April 2025, 11:19am

Section I: Contracting authority

I.1) Name and addresses

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Seacole Building, 2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

Contact

Defra group Commercial

Email

sscs@defra.gov.uk

Country

United Kingdom

Region code

UK - United Kingdom

Internet address(es)

Main address

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs>

Buyer's address

<https://defra-family.force.com/s/Welcome>

I.2) Information about joint procurement

The contract is awarded by a central purchasing body

I.4) Type of the contracting authority

National or federal Agency/Office

I.5) Main activity

Environment

Section II: Object

II.1) Scope of the procurement

II.1.1) Title

Specialist Science and Contingency Services

Reference number

C24955

II.1.2) Main CPV code

- 73000000 - Research and development services and related consultancy services

II.1.3) Type of contract

Services

II.1.4) Short description

The SSCS contracts give government customers access to specialist diagnostic, testing, advice and research services to support compliant statutory obligations relating to biosecurity, agriculture, food standards/ safety and environmental protection relating to plant health and wildlife. The contracts also provide incident and contingency services.

II.1.6) Information about lots

This contract is divided into lots: No

II.1.7) Total value of the procurement (excluding VAT)

Value excluding VAT: £345,710,030

II.2) Description

II.2.2) Additional CPV code(s)

- 90721000 - Environmental safety services
- 90720000 - Environmental protection

- 90721400 - Genetic resources protection services
- 90721700 - Endangered species protection services
- 79311300 - Survey analysis services
- 90712400 - Natural resources management or conservation strategy planning services
- 90721300 - Food or feed contamination protection services
- 90721800 - Natural risks or hazards protection services
- 73200000 - Research and development consultancy services
- 90715000 - Pollution investigation services
- 73100000 - Research and experimental development services
- 90711500 - Environmental monitoring other than for construction
- 85200000 - Veterinary services
- 73112000 - Marine research services
- 73110000 - Research services
- 90722000 - Environmental rehabilitation

II.2.3) Place of performance

NUTS codes

- UK - United Kingdom

Main site or place of performance

United Kingdom

II.2.4) Description of the procurement

The existing Long Term Service Agreement framework expired on 31 March 2025. Defra sought a replacement commercial arrangement to provide continued access to critical scientific evidence and contingency services to support its policy making and operational responsibilities, including emergency response capabilities in relation to food and the

environment. The contract is also used by other government departments, including but not limited to the Food Standards Agency and the Home Office. The Supplier has the ability to competitively deliver reliable, high quality business and scientific services; well-proven transition and transformation capabilities within challenging timeframes; and possesses a vision and commitment to enhance relevant scientific capability into the future. The seamless continuation of services is essential due to statutory requirements, and Defra therefore must have a supplier that has the required capability in place as of the effective date. The contract is awarded for a period of five years and has the option to extend for an additional five years (+2+1+1+1).

II.2.5) Award criteria

Quality criterion - Name: Quality / Weighting: 45

Quality criterion - Name: Sustainability / Weighting: 10

Cost criterion - Name: Price / Weighting: 45

II.2.11) Information about options

Options: No

II.2.13) Information about European Union Funds

The procurement is related to a project and/or programme financed by European Union funds: No

Section IV. Procedure

IV.1) Description

IV.1.1) Type of procedure

Award of a contract without prior publication of a call for competition in the cases listed below

- The services can be provided only by a particular economic operator for the following reason:
 - absence of competition for technical reasons

Explanation:

Defra has awarded a contract using the negotiated procedure without prior publication, in accordance with Regulation 32(2)(b)(ii) (competition absent for technical reasons) of the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

The previous contract expired on 31 March 2025 and the contract must be made to ensure critical statutory specialist science and contingency services continue to be provided. This contract has been awarded to Fera Science Limited for the provision of specialist science and contingency services.

To inform its decision-making, Defra has undertaken three rounds of market engagement with interested suppliers. Before each round, it has published a prior information notice (PIN), ensuring that all interested suppliers are aware of the re-procurement and have had the opportunity to express interest and provide evidence of their capacity and capabilities to perform all or part of the services. Three elements of the specification were identified:

- (a) those aspects where there is no competition, eg, those parts of the specification that relate to the required specialist facilities for this contract;
- (b) those parts where there may be genuine competition.
- (c) those parts where competitors have expressed an interest in supplying all or part of the requirement, but have not provided sufficient information when requested to establish that they have, or could develop in the time available, the necessary capacity or capability.

In relation to (b) there are some services for Government Departments, FSA, HSE and DAERA, where reasonable alternatives in the market were identified, as such, those services have been disaggregated and those respective Departments will identify a route to market outside of this contract. Some research and development requirements that are not related to (a), will be procured through Defra's existing RDE Framework or such other route to market. As such these services no longer form part of the specification for this contract.

In relation to (a) and (c), the market engagement has identified that currently there is no candidate who is able to deliver the requirements of the specification and competition is absent for technical reasons.

As such this contract has been awarded by direct award in accordance with Regulation 32(2)(b)(ii).

IV.1.8) Information about the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA)

The procurement is covered by the Government Procurement Agreement: Yes

Section V. Award of contract

A contract/lot is awarded: Yes

V.2) Award of contract

V.2.1) Date of conclusion of the contract

28 March 2025

V.2.2) Information about tenders

Number of tenders received: 1

Number of tenders received from SMEs: 0

Number of tenders received from tenderers from non-EU Member States: 0

The contract has been awarded to a group of economic operators: No

V.2.3) Name and address of the contractor

Fera Science Ltd

York Bio Tech Campus, Sand Hutton, York, North Yorkshire.

York

YO41 1LZ

Email

tracker@fera.co.uk

Telephone

+44 1904462000

Country

United Kingdom

NUTS code

- UK - United Kingdom

National registration number

9413107

Internet address

www.fera.co.uk

The contractor is an SME

No

V.2.4) Information on value of contract/lot (excluding VAT)

Initial estimated total value of the contract/lot: £345,710,030

Total value of the contract/lot: £345,710,030

Section VI. Complementary information

VI.4) Procedures for review

VI.4.1) Review body

Public Procurement Review Body

N/A

N/A

N/A

Email

publicprocurementreview@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Country

United Kingdom

Internet address

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-procurement-review-service-scope-and-remit>

VI.4.2) Body responsible for mediation procedures

HIGH COURT ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE

London

The Strand

WC2A 2LL

Country

United Kingdom

Internet address

www.find-court-tribunal.service.gov.uk/courts/royal-courts-of-justice