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Planning

Assistance Centre to Provide Professional Qualifications Advice and Signposting for UK and Overseas Users

Business Energy and Industrial Strategy

F01: Prior information notice

Prior information only

Notice identifier: 2022/S 000-026849

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocids-h6vhtk-036b64

Published 26 September 2022, 12:52pm

Section I: Contracting authority

I.1) Name and addresses

Business Energy and Industrial Strategy

1 Victoria Street

London

SW1H0ET

Contact

Joe Worthington

Email

joe.worthington@beis.gov.uk

Country

United Kingdom

Region code

UKI32 - Westminster

Justification for not providing organisation identifier

Not on any register

Internet address(es)

Main address

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy>

I.3) Communication

Additional information can be obtained from the above-mentioned address

I.4) Type of the contracting authority

Ministry or any other national or federal authority

I.5) Main activity

General public services

Section II: Object

II.1) Scope of the procurement

II.1.1) Title

Assistance Centre to Provide Professional Qualifications Advice and Signposting for UK and Overseas Users

II.1.2) Main CPV code

- 79000000 - Business services: law, marketing, consulting, recruitment, printing and security

II.1.3) Type of contract

Services

II.1.4) Short description

This notice is intended to:

1. Advise of the forthcoming virtual market engagement event which will be held on 10 October 2022 between 15:00 and 16:00; and
2. Ask suppliers to complete a short questionnaire; and
3. Assess market interest and capability to deliver the UK Assistance Centre requirements.

The UK Assistance Centre will be the service responsible for providing information and advice to support overseas professionals seeking to practise their profession in the UK, and UK-qualified professionals seeking to work overseas. The Assistance Centre is the single point of contact for information for those seeking to work in regulated professions. A regulated profession is one in which there are restrictions to pursuing the activities or a subset of activities of the profession, such as for doctors, and/or restrictions for using a professional title, such as the use of 'architect.'

The service will provide support to overseas professionals looking for information on the qualification and experience requirements to work in UK regulated and chartered professions, and to UK-qualified users looking for information on the regulatory requirements to work overseas. We anticipate that this will primarily be through the signposting of users towards the relevant regulator or professional body. Queries can include information about entry or practice requirements for regulated professions in the UK, and overseas professions.

Advice relating to regulatory entry requirements to work in the UK will be provided by regulators and professional bodies. This information needs to be maintained on a newly designed [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) database (the Regulated Professions Register). Regulators and professional bodies will be responsible for maintaining the information in the database and ensuring that it remains up to date. The Assistance Centre supplier will facilitate this.

We are keen to work with interested suppliers to develop the scope of the service. At this stage, we are interested in hearing ideas from suppliers on how they propose delivering the individual elements of the service, and better understand the level of market interest.

This notice has been issued with a high-level overview of the service requirements and proposed market engagement activities. The market engagement will consist of two separate activities:

1. A supplier questionnaire
2. A Virtual Market Engagement Event

The overall aim of these engagements will be to:

- Provide the opportunity to engage with the market and assess market interest in delivering the UK Assistance Centre requirements; and
- Allow interested parties to ask questions about the UK Assistance Centre service.

Supplier Questionnaire:

Suppliers are invited to complete the questionnaire ahead of the Virtual Market Engagement Event on 10 October 2022. Responses to the questionnaire will be used to inform the content of the Virtual Market Engagement Event.

The questionnaire can be accessed here:

<https://forms.office.com/r/g5rfa0ApiM>

II.1.6) Information about lots

This contract is divided into lots: No

II.2) Description

II.2.3) Place of performance

NUTS codes

- UK - United Kingdom

II.2.4) Description of the procurement

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Virtual Market Engagement Event:

Suppliers are invited to attend a Virtual Market Engagement Event on 10 October 2022 between 15:00 and 16:00. The virtual session will be held via Microsoft Teams. During the session, we will offer an introduction to the UK Assistance Centre, provide an overview of the service, and answer any questions.

To book your attendance at the Virtual Market Engagement Event (max two per organisation), please email joe.worthington@beis.gov.uk no later than 5 October 2022.

Please note that BEIS does not in any way intend for this market engagement to trigger a competition. Any potential future competition is subject to internal Departmental approvals.

Qualified professionals work at the forefront of our public services and are crucial to the UK's world-leading services sectors. Consumers value the high-quality services that they receive from these professionals. In the UK, there are more than 200 professions regulated in law by a network of more than 80 regulators, with many more regulated on a voluntary basis.

Regulated professionals provide important contributions to our economy and society, including in sectors such as medicine and healthcare, education, legal services, and architecture. The regulation of professions includes the recognition of professional

qualifications gained in other countries.

In the Professional Qualifications Act 2022, the government put in place a new approach to recognising professional qualifications gained overseas. This will replace the previous EU-derived system. The Act makes provision for an Assistance Centre that will support professionals navigate the regulatory landscape in the UK and overseas.

The high-level objectives of the UK Assistance Centre are to:

- Enable the UK government to meet its obligations under Section 7 of the Professional Qualifications Act 2022.
- Provide advice and signposting to overseas professionals seeking to work in regulated and chartered professions in the UK, and to UK-qualified users looking for information on the requirements to work in professions overseas.
- Identify overseas regulators and competent authorities to signpost queries for countries where there is no national support service (e.g. a NARIC/ENIC) or single point of contact.
- Publish advice on the entry requirements to work in UK regulated and chartered professions and overseas professions in a new online service (the Regulated Professions Register).
- Support the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and other government departments with responding to queries from regulators and individual professionals and overseas counterparts as required.
- Promote the service of the UK Assistance Centre to ensure visibility of the service in the UK and internationally.
- Establish and maintain productive relationships with UK regulatory authorities and Chartered Bodies.
- Establish a system that delivers for UK businesses, including by removing information barriers for professionals providing services overseas.
- Provide information held by the service to the Secretary of State upon request. This will include periodically commissioning data from UK regulators in a format specified by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.
- Support the input of data into the Regulated Professions Register and publish annual qualification recognition data returns uploaded by regulators into the Register. The supplier will not be responsible for the technical support and maintenance of the Regulated Professions Register, which is subject to an existing contract.

Requirements of the Assistance Centre

The requirement of the UK Assistance Centre is to deliver the obligations set out in Section 7 of the Professional Qualifications Act.

The Centre is legally obliged to provide support and guidance to overseas users seeking information on qualification and experience requirements needed to work in UK regulated and chartered professions, and to UK users seeking information on working overseas.

The supplier will work with regulators and professional bodies to provide comprehensive and up to date information on which professions in the UK are regulated; the regulators of each profession; and routes to recognition for overseas users looking to work in UK regulated professions. The supplier will be responsible for ensuring that information provided by regulators in a new [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) database of regulated professions remains up to date (the 'Regulated Professions Register'). The Centre must be able to provide the Secretary of State any information that is held on request, in a GDPR-compliant way.

Alongside managing the Regulated Professions Register website, the Centre will be expected to commission recognition decision data from UK regulators and chartered bodies on an annual basis, ensure that this data is fully uploaded by professional bodies into the database on time, and undertake a sense check of the data.

When Section 7 is commenced, UK regulators will be legally required to provide any information requested by the Centre to support its functions and to assist with responding to queries.

Rationale

Currently, the UK Centre for Professional Qualifications provides a comparable service. However, the demands and use of the Assistance Centre are set to expand as the service transitions from an EU-focussed service to one with a global remit. There will be a continuing need for the supplier to invest in improving the delivery of the service to users and to ensure that information provided by regulators relating to routes to qualification recognition remain up to date as new Free Trade Agreements are signed and implemented, and Recognition Agreements are agreed between UK and overseas regulators.

The UK government's ambitious trade agenda will open up new markets for UK nationals (and those with UK qualifications) and attract overseas professionals who are interested in learning how they can use their qualifications and experience to work in regulated professions in the UK. The supplier will also be expected to provide signposting advice to UK users who are looking for information on the qualification and experience requirements to work in overseas countries and territories. The Assistance Centre, as the point of contact for information on the recognition of professional qualifications, will need

to respond to the queries that arise to harness these new opportunities.

II.2.14) Additional information

Future service deliverables

The service may also be asked to provide advice to support government assistance for refugees by providing them with information to access UK regulated professions - including those currently applying under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme and the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) route.

It is expected that the supplier will signpost and respond to queries regarding regulated and chartered professions redirected from existing complementary government support services to foster a joined-up government support package for services.

The number of queries currently received by the UK Centre for Professional Qualifications is low but fluctuates each month. The volume of complex queries is expected to remain low. We expect the number of queries to increase as new Free Trade Agreements are implemented and routes to recognition between the UK and overseas countries increase.

In line with UK government's 'digital first' policy, we are keen to understand how suppliers can utilise digital technology within their service offering.

Key elements of the service include:

- Enquiry service - The Centre will provide a single point of contact for professionals, employers and professional bodies for advice on the regulation of professions in the UK and overseas, and to offer guidance on access requirements. The service will signpost queries from UK users to overseas counterparts, and from overseas users to the Regulated Professions Register. We are open to ideas on how suppliers can best respond to queries, with preference given to digital methods.
- Website to publish entry requirements - We have developed a public database - the Regulated Professions Register - which brings together UK regulated professions, regulator contact details, routes to recognition, and recognition decision data uploaded by competent authorities. The supplier will be responsible for ensuring that regulators and chartered bodies keep their information up to date. The supplier will also be expected to publish advice on entry requirements for UK-qualified users seeking to work in overseas professions. We are open to suggestions on what type of advice it would be feasible to publish.
- International contact point relationship management - The Centre will act as a point of contact for associated international assistance centre counterparts. Through the development and management of relationships with relevant bodies, the Centre will

ensure that information on overseas counterparts and government contact points remain up to date for signposting overseas queries and, where possible, that support is provided to UK regulators and service users.

The supplier will on occasion also be expected to provide information to Government that could support the development of policy, including by:

- Providing feedback on the delivery of the service, trends in demand, progress in meeting objectives and the current strategic approach and thinking to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and other relevant bodies.
- Provision of advice, responses to, and representation of, the UK government and Devolved Administrations concerning international processes and developments.
- Gathering feedback from professionals periodically to understand how they use the Assistance Centre service and any amendments that need to be made to the support provided.

Proposed budget: £200,000 (inclusive of VAT) per annum

II.3) Estimated date of publication of contract notice

1 December 2022

Section IV. Procedure

IV.1) Description

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

The procurement is covered by the Government Procurement Agreement: Yes