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Tender

## **Project Aether**

Ministry of Defence

F17: Contract notice for contracts in the field of defence and security

Notice identifier: 2021/S 000-030755

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-02ff9a

Published 9 December 2021, 10:45pm

### **Section I: Contracting authority/entity**

#### **I.1) Name, addresses and contact point(s)**

Ministry of Defence

Future Capabilities Group, Spruce 2b, #1261, MOD Abbey Wood

Bristol

BS34 8JH

#### **For the attention of**

Day Alicia

#### **Email(s)**

[Alicia.Day705@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Alicia.Day705@mod.gov.uk)

#### **Country**

United Kingdom

#### **Further information**

Further information can be obtained from the above mentioned contact point(s)

**Specifications and additional documents (including documents for competitive dialogue and a dynamic purchasing system) can be obtained from**

The above-mentioned contact point(s)

**Tenders or requests to participate must be sent to**

The above-mentioned contact point(s)

## **I.2) Type of the contracting authority**

Ministry or any other national or federal authority, including their regional or local subdivisions

## **I.3) Main activity**

Defence

## **I.4) Contract award on behalf of other contracting authorities/entities**

The contracting authority is purchasing on behalf of other contracting authorities:

No

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## **Section II: Object of the contract**

### **II.1) Description**

#### **II.1.1) Title attributed to the contract by the contracting authority**

Project Aether

#### **II.1.2) Type of contract and location of works, place of delivery or of performance**

Services

Service category No 3: Defence services, military defence services and civil defence services

#### **Main site or location of works, place of delivery or of performance**

Bristol

#### **NUTS code**

- UK - United Kingdom

#### **II.1.3) Information on framework agreement**

The notice involves the establishment of a framework agreement

#### **II.1.4) Information on framework agreement**

Framework agreement with several operators

#### **Duration of the framework agreement**

Duration in months: 18

#### **Estimated total value of purchases for the entire duration of the framework agreement**

Estimated value excluding VAT:

£100,000,000

#### **II.1.5) Short description of the contract or purchase(s)**

Project AETHER (Identification of systems that can perform Ultra-Persistent Wide Area Communications with Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance)

The Contracting Authority has a developing requirement to demonstrate Ultra-Persistent Wide Area Communications with Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance using Stratospheric Uncrewed Air Systems that can be rapidly manoeuvred to an area of interest that is anywhere in the world.

The Contracting Authority requires a capability that can be rapidly manoeuvred to any area of interest in the world to provide ultra-persistent wide-area communications in addition to Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance. The information must be available in near real time and be exploited using a range of existing resources. The capability must be on task for several months at a time with minimal resupply or maintenance effort.

The Authority intends to invite all eligible companies who pass the PQQ to tender for the Framework. Note that while there is no down-selection to any specific numbers of bidders at this stage, only companies who can demonstrate relevance to the subject matter of the

lots within the Framework through their previous or existing portfolio of work (of which examples are requested via the PQQ) will pass the PQQ and be considered eligible to receive an Invitation to Tender at the next stage of the competition. Potential bidders may bid to join a single lot or multiple lots. Please provide evidence in a maximum of 4 sides of A4 per lot.

As with any framework, whilst there can be no guarantee of any particular quantity of work being put through it, the Authority intends to conduct further mini-competitions to select successful framework contractors or collaborative teams of framework contractors within individual lots or across a number of Lots in any combination, and expects that the work will be conducted progressively in spirals giving ongoing opportunities to many of the framework participants.

The lots will include, but may not be limited to, the following subject matter themes:

- Platform – a rapidly deployable uncrewed platform capable of working at stratospheric altitudes to carry out uninterrupted ISR activities
- Payload – capable of being fitted to a platform to carry out uninterrupted and secure ISR activities and communications over an extended period of time
- Integrator – to oversee the integration of the payload onto a platform to enable the processing, exploitation and dissemination of information
- Customer Advisory Network (may include but not be limited to assurance, operationalisation, third party security testing, testing and evaluation).
- Optional lot – Fully accredited air system (including payload).

The Authority must ensure that where access is required to classified information in the course of any tasking or Working Group activity, then this access will only be granted to framework participants with suitable security clearance in place at the time a task is raised. Whilst a particular level of security clearance is not essential for initial entry to the framework following the Invitation to Tender process, the Authority reserves the right to refuse inclusion of any framework participant who does not possess the required clearance level at the time a mini-competition for a task is initiated or a classified Working Group is scheduled.

IPR will be discussed on a task by task basis but the Authority would expect to take ownership of Trials & Demonstrations results and raw data (use of DEFCON 703/705).

All framework participants will be kept updated with progress of this project on a quarterly basis subject to security caveats. Once the PQQ phase has been completed and we move to ITT stage an event will be held in order to discuss the requirement and future

direction.

Please note this framework will be initially for up to 2 years from publication of this PQQ and pending future approvals, the framework would be re-opened on a 12 monthly basis.

The Cyber Risk Assessment code is DCPP- RAR-406930362 and has been rated as Moderate Risk.

#### **II.1.6) Common procurement vocabulary (CPV)**

- 73410000 - Military research and technology

#### **Additional CPV code(s)**

- 35613000 - Unmanned aerial vehicles
- 35720000 - Intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance

#### **II.1.8) Lots**

This contract is divided into lots: Yes

Tenders may be submitted for one or more lots

#### **II.1.9) Information about variants**

Variants will be accepted: No

### **II.2) Quantity or scope of the contract**

#### **II.2.1) Total quantity or scope**

Divided into Lots, re-opened at 12 month intervals, and subject to future approvals for Options (up to a maximum of 7 years duration, including the initial 18 months from contract award).

Estimated value excluding VAT:

£100,000,000

#### **II.2.2) Information about options**

Options: Yes

Description of these options: Subject to future approvals for Options (up to a maximum of

7 years duration, including the initial 18 months from contract award).

Provisional timetable for recourse to these options:

In months: 18 (from the award of the contract)

### **II.2.3) Information about renewals**

This contract is subject to renewal: No

## **II.3) Duration of the contract or time limit for completion**

Start date: 31 May 2022

End date: 31 December 2023

### **Information about lots**

#### **Lot No**

5

#### **Lot title**

All Lots as described in the CN

### **2) Common procurement vocabulary (CPV)**

- 73410000 - Military research and technology

### **5) Additional information about lots**

The Contracting Authority intends to use an e-Tendering system in this procurement exercise, please visit [www.contracts.mod.uk](http://www.contracts.mod.uk) for full details and to register your interest in this procurement.

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## **Section III. Legal, economic, financial and technical information**

### **III.1) Conditions relating to the contract**

#### **III.1.4) Other particular conditions to which the performance of the contract is subject, in particular with regard to security of supply and security of information**

Appropriate security clearance will be notified as a pre-condition of certain tasks.

### **III.2) Conditions for participation**

#### **III.2.1) Personal situation**

**Criteria regarding the personal situation of economic operators (that may lead to their exclusion) including requirements relating to enrolment on professional or trade registers**

Information and formalities necessary for evaluating if the requirements are met: Suppliers Instructions How to Express Interest in this Tender:

1. Register your company on the eSourcing portal (this is only required once)
  - Browse to the eSourcing Portal
  - Click the “Click here to register” link
  - Accept the terms and conditions and click “continue”
  - Enter your correct business and user details
  - Note the username you chose and click “Save” when complete
  - You will shortly receive an email with your unique password (please keep this secure)
2. Express an Interest in the tender
  - Login to the portal with the username/password
  - Click the "PQQs Open to All Suppliers" link. (These are Pre-Qualification Questionnaires open to any registered supplier)
  - Click on the relevant PQQ to access the content.
  - Click the “Express Interest” button in the “Actions” box on the left-hand side of the page.

- This will move the PQQ into your “My PQQs” page. (This is a secure area reserved for your projects only)
- Click on the PQQ code, you can now access any attachments by clicking the “Settings and Buyer Attachments” in the “Actions” box

### 3. Responding to the tender

- You can now choose to “Reply” or “Reject” (please give a reason if rejecting)
- You can now use the ‘Messages’ function to communicate with the buyer and seek any clarification
- Note the deadline for completion, then follow the onscreen instructions to complete the PQQ
- There may be a mixture of online & offline actions for you to perform (there is detailed online help available)

If you require any further assistance please consult the online help, or contact the eTendering help desk.

### **Criteria regarding the personal situation of subcontractors (that may lead to their rejection) including requirements relating to enrolment on professional or trade registers**

Information and formalities necessary for evaluating if the requirements are met: Suppliers Instructions How to Express Interest in this Tender:

#### 1. Register your company on the eSourcing portal (this is only required once)

- Browse to the eSourcing Portal
- Click the “Click here to register” link
- Accept the terms and conditions and click “continue”
- Enter your correct business and user details
- Note the username you chose and click “Save” when complete
- You will shortly receive an email with your unique password (please keep this secure)

#### 2. Express an Interest in the tender

- Login to the portal with the username/password
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### 3. Responding to the tender

- You can now choose to "Reply" or "Reject" (please give a reason if rejecting)
- You can now use the 'Messages' function to communicate with the buyer and seek any clarification
- Note the deadline for completion, then follow the onscreen instructions to complete the PQQ
- There may be a mixture of online & offline actions for you to perform (there is detailed online help available)

If you require any further assistance please consult the online help, or contact the eTendering help desk.

#### **III.2.2) Economic and financial ability**

##### **Criteria regarding the economic and financial standing of economic operators (that may lead to their exclusion)**

Information and formalities necessary for evaluating if the requirements are met: As stated in PQQ

Minimum level(s) of standards possibly required: As stated in PQQ

##### **Criteria regarding the economic and financial standing of subcontractors (that may lead to their exclusion)**

Information and formalities necessary for evaluating if the requirements are met: As stated in PQQ

**III.2.3) Technical and/or professional capacity**

**Criteria regarding the technical and/or professional ability of economic operators (that may lead to their exclusion)**

Information and formalities necessary for evaluating if the requirements are met: As stated in PQQ

**Criteria regarding the technical and/or professional ability of subcontractors (that may lead to their rejection)**

Information and formalities necessary for evaluating if the requirements are met: As stated in PQQ

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## **Section IV: Procedure**

### **IV.1) Type of procedure**

#### **IV.1.1) Type of procedure**

Restricted

### **IV.2) Award criteria**

#### **IV.2.1) Award criteria**

the criteria stated in the specifications, in the invitation to tender or to negotiate or in the descriptive document

#### **IV.2.2) Information about electronic auction**

An electronic auction has been used: no

### **IV.3) Administrative information**

#### **IV.3.1) File reference number attributed by the contracting authority**

702308451

#### **IV.3.2) Previous publication(s) concerning the same contract**

no

#### **IV.3.4) Time limit for receipt of tenders or requests to participate**

17 January 2022 - 11:59pm

#### **IV.3.6) Language(s) in which tenders or requests to participate may be drawn up**

English

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## **Section VI: Complementary information**

### **VI.1) Information about recurrence**

This is a recurrent procurement: No

### **VI.2) Information about European Union funds**

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

### **VI.3) Additional information**

The Contracting Authority intends to use an e-Tendering system in this procurement exercise, please visit [www.contracts.mod.uk](http://www.contracts.mod.uk) for full details and to register your interest in this procurement.