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Planning

Defra Special Project - Stakeholder Engagement

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

UK2: Preliminary market engagement notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

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Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-05e289

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Changes to notice

This notice has been edited. The [previous version](#) is still available.

Error - attachment not viewable.

Scope

Description

Defra is responsible for managing a confidential and sensitive project that is exploring

options to deliver organisational change to support a long-term strategic objective. The project is complex, multi-year, and involves stakeholders who are accustomed to current arrangements and may be resistant even to the discussion of change.

We require an experienced Stakeholder Engagement Adviser to provide strategic advice and support in shaping and delivering an engagement approach that helps to build trust, address concerns, and guide stakeholders through a common-sense discussion of the options and their benefits/disbenefits, and potentially also a sensitive transition process. Defra has already completed stakeholder mapping but requires support in engagement planning, advisory services, and risk management.

Contract dates (estimated)

- 22 April 2026 to 21 April 2027
- 1 year

Main procurement category

Services

CPV classifications

- 79112100 - Stakeholders representation services
- 79900000 - Miscellaneous business and business-related services
- 79416100 - Public relations management services
- 79416000 - Public relations services
- 79420000 - Management-related services
- 79416200 - Public relations consultancy services

Contract locations

- UK - United Kingdom

Engagement

Engagement deadline

24 November 2025

Engagement process description

1. EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

We require information on the market's capability, capacity and interest to provide the services detailed below.

Please advise if you are interested in bidding for this opportunity.

If you are not interested in bidding, please provide reason(s) as this will be valuable feedback.

2. PROCUREMENT TIMETABLE

EOI publication date: 17/11/2025

EOI return date: 24/11/2025

Anticipated Route to Market: Competitive Flexible Procedure

High Level Overview

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We require an experienced Stakeholder Engagement Adviser to provide strategic advice and support in shaping and delivering an engagement approach that helps to build trust, address concerns, and guide stakeholders through a common-sense discussion of the options and their benefits/disbenefits, and potentially also a sensitive transition process. Defra has already completed stakeholder mapping but requires support in engagement planning, advisory services, and risk management.

We are seeking to identify a suitable adviser with the following attributes:

3. HIGH-LEVEL CREDENTIALS & REQUIREMENTS

Demonstrable expertise in stakeholder engagement and advisory services in complex, sensitive, or confidential government or organisational projects.

Proven track record in navigating resistance to change and creating constructive dialogue with stakeholders.

Experience in designing and delivering engagement strategies that support decision-making at senior levels.

Strong understanding of the cultural, behavioural, and organisational dynamics that underpin stakeholder concerns.

Experience of or familiarity with working on a project within a government context.

Ability to travel to London

4. COLLABORATIVE WORKING

Ability to work collaboratively with policy teams, governance boards, and external advisers to ensure a joined-up approach.

Must have an adaptive and flexible approach, ensuring engagement outputs align with evolving project timelines and changes.

5. KEY OUTPUTS

Support the project team in reviewing existing and potential engagement options and approaches. Provide advice on:

Strengths, weaknesses, risks, and opportunities of each engagement approach.

Communication methods most likely to build trust and reduce resistance.

Cultural and organisational considerations that may affect stakeholder responses.

Dependencies between stakeholder groups and what other stakeholder groups could be brought into the mix.

Ability to build constructive relationships with stakeholders who may be initially unwilling to engage.

Plan and run a minimum of 2 engagement events

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

Identification and planned mitigation of stakeholder-related risks (e.g., reputational, operational, governance).

Development of early warning mechanisms to detect emerging resistance or issues.

Provision of strategies to address misinformation, distrust, or disengagement.

7. PLANNING

Advice on priority stakeholder groups and tailored engagement approaches.

Guidance on sequencing of communications and interventions to maximise effectiveness.

Identification of additional areas where independent advisory input would strengthen outcomes.

Event planning

8. REPORTING

Provision of a monthly highlight report setting out progress, insights, risks, and recommendations.

Delivery of knowledge transfer towards the end of the contract to ensure all lessons and approaches are embedded in the core team.

9. CROSS FUNCTIONAL WORKING

Alongside this engagement adviser contract, the project will also require support from legal, policy, and operational advisers. It is anticipated that there will be dependencies between the contract deliverables, and the successful supplier will be expected to work closely with these parties to ensure alignment.

10. NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

Due to the sensitive and commercially confidential nature of this project, suppliers are required to enter into a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) to receive a copy of the Invitation to Tender documentation which will be required as part of the PQQ stage.

Timeframes

The contract is anticipated to commence in March/April 2026 for a period of 12 months.

Questions

As part of your registration of interest, we are asking suppliers to respond to the below questions. This is to support our knowledge of the market prior to tender.

Based on your experience, what mix of skills or team structure tends to work best for a project of this nature (e.g., senior strategic adviser vs. a small delivery team)?

What delivery models or approaches would you recommend for this type of project?

Are there any commercial constraints or considerations we should be aware of?

From your experience, what are the biggest risks when managing stakeholder engagement around sensitive organisational change?

What early warning mechanisms or engagement tools do you find most effective in managing stakeholder resistance or misinformation?

Do you hold any certifications (e.g. ISO, Cyber Essentials)?

How do you manage data protection and security?

What suggestions do you have for improving the scope or approach of the future tender?

Are there any barriers to participation we should consider?

Responses

Please respond to this EOI and the questions within via the following MS forms link by the deadline outlined above.

Expression of Interest for a Defra Special Project - Stakeholder Engagement – Fill in form

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=UCQKdycCYkyQx044U38RAr80>

[PcDqZuJCsMgBqu0dYXJURDJNSTVWTUizWk84MFJLWIZTRTBGTktKUy4u](#)

Participation

Particular suitability

- Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)
- Voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSE)

Submission

Publication date of tender notice (estimated)

2 December 2025

Contracting authority

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PNBD-3289-CDGX

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London

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United Kingdom

Contact name: Katie Thompson

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

Region: UKI32 - Westminster

Organisation type: Public authority - central government