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Award

Older Buildings Research (OBR) Professional Engineering Expert Advice Role

Department for Education

UK5: Transparency notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

Notice identifier: 2025/S 000-084057

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-05f859

Published 17 December 2025, 5:08pm

Scope

Description

The Department for Education (DfE) requires further specialist technical services from an existing supplier to support the final phase of the Older Building Research (OBR) project. The OBR project has already been procured and a consortium bid was successful; of which the supplier was a party, fulfilling the Engineering Expert role as a subcontractor to the prime supplier. This supplier is Useful Simple Group Limited.

Through the OBR project, the Department is investigating, cataloguing and extrapolating the condition of the post-war education estate, including through onsite intrusive investigations. This research project will enable the Department to improve its understanding of the post-war education estate. This work is underpinned by a bespoke risk model, designed using research and investigations conducted to date and based on the technical assumptions and interpretative approach applied by the Engineering Expert Advice role. The project requires a further final phase not originally included in the contract with the prime supplier successful in the original procurement. This final phase involves interpreting and enhancing fieldwork inputs for model development, support on Large Language Model (LLM) workflows to support LLM development, providing engineering-led interpretation of fieldwork findings to enhance model relevance and insight, and applying the already established fieldwork approach across up to six

additional schools, developing proposals for alternative methodologies to enhance data quality and fieldwork insights.

To ensure continuity and compatibility with the research and model developed to date, the services under this additional appointment must be delivered by the supplier who fulfilled the Engineering Expert Advice role in the original procurement and using the same technical assumptions and interpretative approach previously developed by them and applied. This consistency is essential; the model and supporting analysis have been built incrementally as a single coherent system.

Introducing outputs based on different assumptions and knowledge base would require significant re-engineering and re-validation of existing work, creating disproportionate technical complexity and undermining the integrity of the model.

The appointed supplier will provide engineering-led interpretation of the above scope to integrate new data into the current risk model without compromising its structure or functionality. These services will enable the Department to maintain a consistent technical approach, ensuring that new findings complement and strengthen the existing evidence.

While the "Notice Linking" section of this notice states no other have been published, this is infact an error and a limitation of system this notice was published via. This notice is infact linked to the Contract Award Notice 33c8f7e5-1b28-45a8-b750-f00d7f6471d3 (<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/33c8f7e5-1b28-45a8-b750-f00d7f6471d3>).

Contract 1. Older Buildings Research (OBR) Professional Engineering Expert Advice Role

Supplier

- USEFUL SIMPLE GROUP LIMITED

Contract value

- £0 excluding VAT
- £0 including VAT

Above the relevant threshold

Earliest date the contract will be signed

19 January 2026

Contract dates (estimated)

- 19 January 2026 to 31 March 2026
- 2 months, 13 days

Main procurement category

Services

Options

The right to additional purchases while the contract is valid.

The Department reserves the right to commission additional services from Useful Simple Group to support the OBR project, provided efficiencies allow this within our existing budget of [TO BE DETERMINED] including VAT and [TO BE DETERMINED] excluding VAT.

CPV classifications

- 71000000 - Architectural, construction, engineering and inspection services

Contract locations

- UKC - North East (England)
 - UKK - South West (England)
 - UKJ - South East (England)
 - UKH - East of England
-

Participation

Particular suitability

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

Other information

Description of risks to contract performance

The Department and relevant teams supporting this project are aware of no risks which would allow for a Materialisation of a known risk.

Conflicts assessment prepared/revised

Yes

Procedure

Procedure type

Direct award

Direct award justification

Additional or repeat goods, services or works - extension or partial replacement

Justification under Paragraph 7, schedule 5:

(a) The justification applies where the contracting authority is procuring services from i) an existing supplier ii) which are an extension to existing services and iii) in circumstances where a change in supplier would result in the receipt of services different from or incompatible with the previous services and iv) this difference would result in disproportionate technical difficulties. All four tests are met here:

(b) As regards i), the supplier was part of the winning consortium in the original procurement as a subcontractor to the prime and therefore is the existing supplier of these services. The Contracting Authority now needs to contract directly with this supplier.

(c) As regards ii) these research services are an extension to existing research services as it is the final phase where 6 additional schools will be added;

(d) As regards iii), The next phase of the OBR project requires the same fieldwork approach to be applied across 6 additional schools and for alternative methodologies to be developed and tested. In order for new findings to be compatible with earlier work, this must be done using the same assumptions and interpretative approach that had been applied previously, in the existing research and risk model.

(e) As regards iv), if a different supplier were appointed, the interpretation of earlier and new fieldwork would inevitably be carried out using different professional judgements and assumptions. This would change how findings are assessed and how they are used to

inform the model. As a result, the outputs produced would not be compatible with the existing model and the data used to inform it. It would risk wasting the work already done.

Consequently, a change in supplier would result in the Department receiving services and outputs that are different and incompatible with those already developed. This incompatibility arises from how the model and supporting work are conducted and built up incrementally over the course of the project, and not due to cost, time, or other considerations.

Further and finally, it should be noted that the value is currently anticipated to be below threshold by £88 and therefore this Transparency Notice is voluntary at the current time as the contracting authority also has the ability to award a below-threshold contract to the supplier. However if for whatever reason the value exceeds the threshold, and the contract becomes a Convertible Contract, then the contracting authority will seek to rely on the direct award exemption at Schedule 5 paragraph 7.

Supplier

USEFUL SIMPLE GROUP LIMITED

- Companies House: 03831898

Temple Chambers, 3-7 Temple Avenue

London

EC4Y 0HP

United Kingdom

Email: info@expedition.uk.com

Website: <https://expedition.uk.com/>

Region: UKI31 - Camden and City of London

Small or medium-sized enterprise (SME): Yes

Voluntary, community or social enterprise (VCSE): Yes

Contract 1. Older Buildings Research (OBR) Professional Engineering Expert Advice Role

Contracting authority

Department for Education

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PDZG-3487-DPVD

Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street

London

SW1P3BT

United Kingdom

Email: PolicyAssurance.COMMERCIALQUERIES@education.gov.uk

Region: UKI32 - Westminster

Organisation type: Public authority - central government