



RISE

Retrofit information,
support & expertise

How to Develop Successful Tender Responses

Supply chain advice pack

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Why tender responses matter

Introduction

A tender is the formal process used by clients to select a contractor, installer or delivery partner. The tender response is your opportunity to demonstrate how you will meet the client's requirements and deliver the desired outcomes against a set of evaluation criteria.

Winning work

Winning work is not simply about being able to deliver retrofit. Clients need confidence that organisations understand the requirements, can manage risks, provide value for money and deliver successful outcomes for residents.

Although the priority areas and scoring methodology will differ between tenders, most clients assess a combination of technical capability, delivery confidence, quality, social value and commercial viability. A strong tender response will typically provide evidence of:

- Technical competence
- Relevant experience
- Delivery capability
- Quality assurance processes
- Social value commitments
- Commercial understanding

Understanding what the client really wants

Tenders are not simply asking whether you can do the work; they are assessing whether you can successfully deliver the client's required outcomes. Understanding the specification, programme requirements, evaluation criteria and contractual obligations will help ensure your response is targeted, compliant and aligned with the client's priorities.

Tender Document	What to Look For	Action for the Supply Chain
Specification	Scope of works, measures, outputs and requirements	Highlight all mandatory requirements and delivery expectations
Evaluation Criteria	Weighting and scoring methodology	Focus effort on the highest-scoring sections
Programme Requirements	Delivery milestones. Timescales, reporting requirements and KPIs	Assess whether delivery expectations are realistic and ensure resources can meet programme demands
Contract Requirements	Delivery obligations and liabilities	Check that commitments are realistic and achievable
Social Value Requirements	Community benefits expected by the client	Align proposals with local priorities and measurable outcomes
Technical Requirements	PAS compliance, quality standards and certifications	Gather supporting evidence and accreditation documents

Developing a bid response plan

Definition

A bid response plan is a roadmap for developing a tender submission, helping organisations manage tasks, responsibilities, timelines and evidence to maximise their chances of success.

Why use a bid response plan?

A bid response plan helps organisations to:

- Understand client requirements and evaluation criteria.
- Assign responsibilities across the bid team.

- Gather the right evidence and supporting information.
- Manage deadlines and avoid last-minute submissions.
- Improve the quality, consistency and compliance of responses.
- Reduce the risk of missing requirements or losing marks.

What should a bid response plan include?

Treat a tender response like a project. A clear bid response plan can help improve efficiency, reduce errors and increase the likelihood of submitting a competitive, high-quality bid.

Element	Purpose
Tender requirements review	Understand what the client is asking for
Bid timetable	Manage deadlines and key milestones
Roles and responsibilities	Allocate ownership of responses
Evidence requirements	Identify supporting documents and case studies
Review process	Check quality, compliance and accuracy
Submission plan	Ensure the bid is submitted correctly and on time

Understanding evaluation criteria

What are evaluation criteria?

Evaluation criteria are the standards and scoring measures that clients use to assess and compare tender submissions. They help contracting authorities, local authorities and housing providers determine which bidder offers the best overall solution based on factors such as quality, technical capability, social value, risk management and cost.

Understanding the evaluation criteria is one of the most important steps in developing a successful tender response. Even highly capable organisations can lose bids if they fail to address the areas that carry the greatest weighting or do not provide the type of evidence evaluators are looking for.

Why is evaluation criteria important?

Many unsuccessful bids fail not because the organisation lacks capability, but because the response does not adequately answer the question or demonstrate how requirements will be met.

Understanding the evaluation criteria helps organisations to:

- Focus effort on high-scoring questions.
- Tailor responses to the client's priorities.
- Provide the right evidence and supporting information.
- Avoid generic responses.
- Maximise available marks.
- Demonstrate value beyond price.

High-scoring responses are typically evidence-based and clearly demonstrate how requirements will be delivered. Rather than making broad statements such as "we have extensive retrofit experience", provide specific examples that explain what was delivered, who the client was, when the project was completed and what outcomes were achieved. Evidence such as project results, customer satisfaction scores, social value outcomes, compliance records and lessons learned can help provide evaluators with greater confidence in your ability to deliver the contract successfully.

Tender Tip: Tell the evaluator, don't make them guess. Use specific evidence to demonstrate your claims and clearly explain how previous experience is relevant to the project you are bidding for.

How are marks awarded?

Many tenders clearly indicate how marks are awarded through evaluation criteria and score drivers. Understanding the criteria can help organisations focus their efforts on the areas that contribute most to the overall score.

Score drivers	What clients are looking for
Technical quality	Clear delivery methodology and understanding of requirements.
Relevant experience	Evidence of similar retrofit projects and successful outcomes.
Quality assurance	Robust management systems and quality control processes.
Resident engagement	Effective communication, customer care and support for residents.
Compliance	PAS 2030/20235 compliance, accreditations and regulatory adherence.
Social value	Measurable local benefits and community impact.
Risk management	Awareness of project risks and appropriate mitigation measures.
Pricing	Value for money and commercially sustainable delivery.

Tender Tip: Don't assume price carries the highest weighting. Many retrofit tenders place significant emphasis on quality, resident engagement, compliance and social value, so ensure your response reflects the criteria that carry the most marks.

Writing strong tender responses

What makes a strong tender response?

Writing a successful tender response is about more than answering the question. It is about demonstrating to the client that your organisation understands the project requirements, can manage the associated risks and has the capability to deliver the desired outcomes. Evaluators are typically reviewing multiple submissions, so responses should be clear, concise, evidence-based and directly aligned to the evaluation criteria.

Strong responses should explain:

- What you will deliver.
- How you will deliver it.
- Who will be responsible for delivery.
- How risks will be managed.
- How success will be measured.
- What evidence demonstrates your capability.

A simple response framework

Responses should directly address these priorities and demonstrate how your organisation will meet them in practice. Where possible, use examples from similar projects and explain how lessons learned have been incorporated into your delivery approach.

Section	What to include
What	The service or activity being delivered.
How	The proposed delivery approach.
Who	Roles, responsibilities and relevant expertise.
Evidence	Case studies, accreditations and examples.

Outcome	Benefits for the client, residents and project.
What	The service or activity being delivered.

Using artificial intelligence (AI) in bid responses

AI tools

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools can help supply chain organisations improve efficiency when developing tender responses, particularly when resources are limited or bid writing experience is developing. AI can support the tender process by helping organisations analyse requirements, structure responses, summarise information and improve clarity and consistency.

However, AI should be viewed as a support tool rather than a replacement for subject matter expertise. Clients are assessing your organisation's experience, capability and delivery approach, not the quality of an AI-generated response.

How can AI support bid development

Bid activity	How AI can help
Reviewing tender documents	Summarise specifications, identify key requirements and highlight compliance obligations.
Bid planning	Create response plans, action lists and tender programmes.
Drafting responses	Develop first drafts and response structures.
Editing and proofreading	Improve grammar, readability and consistency.
Evidence mapping	Match case studies and evidence to evaluation criteria.

Quality assurance

Check responses against client requirements and evaluation criteria.

Using AI wisely

AI-generated content should always be reviewed and validated by the bid team before submission. While AI can help improve efficiency and accelerate the drafting process, it cannot verify whether information is accurate, compliant or specific to your organisation. Responsibility for the final submission remains with the bidder, so all technical information, project experience, pricing assumptions, social value commitments and delivery proposals should be checked by suitably competent personnel to ensure they accurately reflect what the organisation can deliver.

AI can help with	AI should not be used to
Structuring responses and creating first drafts.	Inventing experience, case studies or performance data.
Improving clarity, readability, and consistency.	Creating false or unrealistic social value commitments.
Generating response outlines and action plans.	Producing inaccurate technical, commercial or compliance information.
Summarising tender documents and technical information.	Replacing technical reviews by competent personnel.
Identifying gaps in responses.	Making delivery commitments that have not been validated.
Supporting quality assurance reviews.	Submitting responses without human review and verification.
Reviewing responses against evaluation criteria.	Assuming AI-generated content is always correct.

Social value in tenders

Developing meaningful social value commitments

Social value has become an increasingly important part of retrofit procurement, particularly for local authorities, housing providers and publicly funded programmes. It is no longer viewed as an "added extra" but as a core component of project delivery, often carrying a significant weighting within tender evaluations.

At its simplest, social value refers to the wider economic, social and environmental benefits created through the delivery of a project. Clients want to understand how your organisation will contribute to local priorities, support communities and deliver benefits that extend beyond the retrofit works themselves.

Further reading: [The New Social Value Model](#)

Making commitments measurable and aligning with delivery

The strongest social value proposals are those that are integrated into the delivery approach rather than treated as standalone commitments. For example, if a project requires significant installation activity in a local area, opportunities may exist to:

- Recruit and train local residents.
- Provide work experience placements.
- Use local subcontractors and suppliers.
- Deliver community information events.
- Create retrofit skills pathways for young people.

These activities can generate meaningful local benefits while also supporting project delivery.

Similarly, ensuring social value commitments are:

- Relevant
- Measurable

- Deliverable
- Aligned to client priorities

will help inspire confidence in the assessor that you understand their needs and have a clear method to meet and exceed them.

Weak social value commitment	Strong social value commitment
Create local jobs	Recruit 5 apprentices from the local authority area.
Support communities	Deliver 10 community retrofit workshops.
Provide training	Deliver 300 hours of retrofit skills training.

Conclusions

Developing successful tender responses requires more than demonstrating technical competence. Clients are looking for organisations that understand their objectives, can evidence their capability, manage risks effectively and provide confidence that retrofit projects will be delivered safely, efficiently and in line with quality standards. A well-prepared, evidence-based submission that responds directly to the evaluation criteria will always be more competitive than a generic response.

By investing time in bid planning, understanding client priorities, demonstrating meaningful social value and continually learning from previous submissions, supply chain organisations can improve the quality of their tender responses and increase their chances of securing retrofit contracts. Strong tendering practices not only support business growth but also help build trust with clients and position organisations for long-term success within the growing retrofit market.

Resources



Podcast: All RISE podcasts are available [here](#).

Podcast: "Understanding the Procurement Act 2023" available [here](#).



Masterclass: All RISE masterclasses are available [here](#).

Masterclass
"Understanding Warm Homes Funding mechanisms" available [here](#).



Advice pack: All RISE advice packs available [here](#).

Advice pack:
"Procuring for retrofit Framework access" available [here](#).

