



Tendering Handbook



BusinessSA

South Australia's Chamber of
Commerce and Industry



Government of South Australia
Office of the Industry Advocate

Foreword

This Tendering Handbook has been prepared by Business SA expressly for the needs of South Australian organisations bidding to the South Australian Government.

Business SA received a grant from the Office of the Industry Advocate (OIA) in conjunction with the Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division, in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, to conduct a Tender Ready program for 12 selected businesses.

Out of this program a powerful tool for business wanting to improve tender skills has been created. It is a practical “how to” guide for a business:

- meeting the requirements of the procurement process, including areas such as probity constraints
- identifying and meeting the contract needs of Government
- dealing with the requirements that make a compliant tender
- effectively presenting the bid in the documents and through presentations to award panels
- identifying how value-for-money and competence can be demonstrated within the constraints of formal tender documents, and
- selling the qualities of the business in the written tender process to the agency customer.

It supports the wider objectives of the OIA to raise the number and diversity of South Australian businesses winning State Government contracts. This is why the Handbook focusses on small business improving their tenders and making them more capable and ready to perform contracts for Government. The State Government provided for involvement in the Tender Ready program for aboriginal business people and this is also one of its strengths.

It has been informed by detailed consultations with Industry Associations and a range of organisations, from larger companies with mature processes through to small companies, and not for profit organisations. As part of this study, Business SA also ensured they discussed not only what worked for organisations, but also where those organisations had been unsuccessful.

Importantly, Business SA spoke to the South Australian Government procurement officers themselves, to understand where they believed tender quality resulted in organisations unsuccessfully bidding to the Government.

Business SA believes this is a unique guide to organisations on how to bid to the South Australian Government.

This Tendering Handbook should be widely available to South Australian organisations.

“Business SA was delighted to be a major lobbying force behind the creation of the Industry Participation Advocate. We then continued to push for the IPA to have more ‘teeth’ and more resources and we’re pleased that has also occurred. We are already seeing early wins in this incredibly important review of the procurement culture and practices of State public sector agencies. In these tough times, this initiative has the potential to be a real ‘game changer’ for so many of our small to medium sized employers – and therefore a game changer for our State’s jobs and economy.”



Nigel McBride

Chief Executive Officer
Business SA

Business SA, the State’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry has for over 175 years, lobbied both Local and Federal Governments without fear or favour on behalf of South Australian enterprise. We ensure the voice of business is heard. Our focus is clear – to lead business into the future. We help maximise the potential of your expertise, actively represent the needs of employers in a complex regulatory climate and provide real business value.
www.business-sa.com

So You're Ready to Respond ...

You have the request documentation in front of you and you're ready to respond. You have your files containing the marketing, research, background, risk assessment and work done so far to give yourself the best competitive chance of winning the tender ... or do you? You've set aside the resources and time needed to put together your response effectively, and to write a well laid out and easy to read document ... haven't you?

The information in this document, although neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, will provide you with some guidance to help you put together a competitive tender. However, there is no guaranteed method for winning a tender.

The range and methods of procurement undertaken by different public authorities within SA Government reflect the array of SA Government operations.

There is no single buyer in the SA Government. The SA Government is not one market but comprises many different markets with unique needs. While there are some overall requirements on procurement, each agency and department will manage their procurement differently, and interpret the rules around probity and the tender process differently. The onus is on prospective suppliers to research and target the relevant public authorities most likely to use their products and services, and the way they undertake their purchases.

The methods that the SA Government may use to approach the market place for products and services includes:

- Verbal Quote.
- Written Quote.
- Request for Quotation (RFQ).
- Request for Information (RFI).
- Request for Proposal (RFP).
- Expression of Interest (EOI).
- Registration of Interest (ROI).
- Request for Tender (RFT).
- Selective Request for Proposal/Request for Tender/Registration of Interest.

Within this document we will refer to a response to these methods as the "tender process".

Public Authorities

The following is a selection of Public Authorities which are required to follow State Procurement Board policies. These include SA Government agencies and instrumentalities (which include all South Australian Government departments and their administrative units), and certain statutory authorities and corporations as defined by the State Procurement Act 2004.

Each public authority is able to develop its own procurement processes and procedures, meaning that these may vary from one public authority to another (yet are still consistent with the policy framework of the State Procurement Board).

A full list of State Departments and Other State Bodies can be found at www.sa.gov.au/government and includes:

- Attorney-General's Department
- Auditor-General's Department
- Correctional Services
- Country Fire Service
- Courts Administration Authority
- Defence SA
- Department for Communities and Social Inclusion
- Department for Education and Child Development
- Department for Health and Ageing
- Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources
- Department of State Development
- Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure
- Department of Primary Industries and Regions
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Treasury and Finance
- South Australian Tourism Commission
- Housing SA
- SA Water
- WorkCover SA



1. Tender Process



1.1 Introduction

“If we only find out about a tender at tendering time, it’s too late, and we don’t bid” – Major supplier to government

Ideally a tender process should begin before the request documents are released. The more you know about the opportunity, and the organisation that is requesting the tender, the better position you are in to respond. Building relationships through regular contact with relevant public authorities, and having organisational knowledge, enables you to understand the potential customer’s environment and the organisation’s needs. This knowledge then enables you to respond more easily to a tender, placing you in a better position to win the work.

Many parts of the SA Government have more relaxed rules about discussing upcoming work before the release of a request for tender. The pre tender period is the time to build rapport, and pitch the key competitive advantages of your product or service.

1.2 Probity

The SA Government has very firm rules of what public servants can and cannot do. When it comes to procurement, the rules are extremely tight. In South Australia, the State Procurement Board www.spb.sa.gov.au administers the policy. The Auditor General has powers to review the SA Government spending.

Whereas a private sector operator may make subjective decisions about whom to purchase from, and can negotiate a final price, SA Government purchasing is run by strict rules.

Usually, when setting up the tendering process, the procurement officers will set up a scoring system, looking at compliance, previous experience, pricing and other criteria. While this scoring system won’t be visible to tenderers, it will guide the procurement team, who will be accountable for their scoring and eventual outcome.

1.3 Bid Decisions

The bid decision is simply whether to bid or not bid after receiving and reviewing request documentation. Bid decisions are particularly important when bidding is expected to consume significant resources. All tendering costs money; large, complex tenders can be costly, and consideration of the cost to bid, versus the likely outcome, and whether winning the opportunity fits with your organisation’s strategic direction, needs to be undertaken. For particularly large tenders that require significant resources to respond, the decision to bid should be re-visited throughout the tender process.

- Does the opportunity fit with our organisation’s strategic or business plans?
- Can we afford to tender?
- Can we afford to win?

1. Tender Process

The types of questions that need to be answered when making a bid decision include:

- Does the opportunity fit with our organisation's strategic or business plans?
- Does the opportunity lend itself to expansion into new areas or gaining of further expertise?
- What are the risks?
- What are the potential benefits?
- Would successfully winning this opportunity lead to other opportunities?
- Do we have a relationship with the customer?
- Do we understand the customer's goals and issues?
- Do we currently have, and are we willing to commit to, the required resources to make tendering worthwhile (including time and appropriately experienced people)?
- Is there an opportunity to strengthen our position through teaming or by sub-contracting?
- Do we meet pre-qualification requirements (e.g. certifications, accreditations, insurances)?
- Can we meet all of the selection/evaluation criteria?
- Do we have any conflicts of interest that may affect the outcomes of the tender?
- If we are successful, can we actually fulfil the contract requirements and do we have the finances to do so?
- Is price or some other factor (e.g. ownership of particular equipment) a major factor in this tender? If so, is our price likely to be considered competitive?

1.4 Managing the Tender Process

Planning and managing the tender process is an important aspect of submitting a competitive tender. It is usually obvious to a buyer, or assessor, if a tender is poorly organised or hurriedly written and put together; a tender is a reflection on your organisation and is a sales document in itself. The quantity and range of information required to be submitted will determine the skills, knowledge and experience of the people required to work on the tender. If the tender is substantial, you may want to manage it as a project in itself. It is important that you allow enough time, and resource the activity adequately, to provide a response to every requirement in the request documentation, review the written responses, format and produce the tender documentation, and finally submit the tender.

Typically, organisations have their tenders prepared within two thirds of the available time, to allow for review, final pricing and ensuring they deliver a professional looking product.

Plan and manage the tender process

“Use a rifle, not a shotgun – pick your targets, don't just bid for everything”

– Director, listed company

1.4.1 Tender Strategy

In addition to understanding all of the requirements in the request documentation, and ensuring that they are addressed in your tender, you need to decide on, and develop, your tender strategy. Strategies are generally based around pricing, management, technical solutions and positioning. The strategy outcome should be a combination of themes highlighting your strengths and minimising your weaknesses. Three important factors that need to be considered in tendering are compliance, credibility and value for money.

Develop a winning strategy

- **Compliance.** This means adherence to the buyer's submission instructions and process, and the requirements associated with what the buyer is procuring. This means that you must follow the requested format, answer all questions, complete all forms, and submit the tender to the right person, and place, on time. SA Government buyers can (and most often must) set aside any tender that is non-compliant. It is good practice, and often a tender requirement, to prepare a compliance checklist, table or matrix. A compliance matrix can be submitted with your tender to make the buyer's evaluation easier.

1. Tender Process

It cannot be emphasised enough that you must complete the tender documents in the manner the buyer wants. Buyers will put your response and others into their own matrix. Every time you don't follow their format, you are forcing them to do extra work, and inherently, they will mark down your bid. And once again, if you do not complete the tables and sections as requested, your tender may (or must) be set aside and not considered.

Compliance with every requirement is a matter of judgement and risk appetite. Partial compliance with requirements can be valid but ensure that you provide a qualification statement as to why you are only partially compliant. If you choose to be non-compliant with certain requirements, also be sure to state the reason why. Being partially or non-compliant with a requirement won't necessarily get your tender set aside, but be sure to explain why you are partially or completely non-compliant.

“I knew the tenderer could do the work, but they did not include the statements of capability in their tender. It was frustrating, but I am obliged to only consider the information provided in the tender, and so they were unsuccessful” –
procurement officer

- **Credibility.** Your organisation needs to have credibility to be considered. This Handbook is being prepared largely for smaller organisations, which do not have the brand name and experience of their competitors. It is important to show that you can do the work. Include testimonials from customers, lists of projects completed (preferably of a larger value to this one), and work in a similar field. Your aim is to have the purchaser decide that your proposal will be low risk for their department – which you can complete to specification, on time, on budget.
- **Value for Money.** This is the ability to provide a product or service in such a way that it justifies your price. This can translate in ways such as an offering differentiating you from other suppliers in terms of quality, location, performance, delivery

times, customer service levels, measurable results, flexibility, range, compliance, experience, skills, qualifications, accreditations, project management skills, reduced risks, or any other areas that may provide you with a tendering advantage.

You have to convince the buyer that your organisation (and not the competition) has the capability and is best placed to deliver what it is they need, is able to provide the best value for money (which is not necessarily the cheapest option), and that your solution is of benefit to the buyer.

At the start of the tender process, work through your competitive advantages – these are what differentiate your organisation's products and services from others, or at least match those of your larger competitors. These themes will probably be drawn from the value for money list above, as well as any special or unique characteristics of your product or service.

The themes resulting from your tender strategy should feature throughout your tender; they should differentiate your tender from your competitors and demonstrate benefit to the buyer.

Your tender strategy should be about how you plan to win the tender and how this translates into developing winning tender documentation.

1. Tender Process

1.4.2 Initial Evaluation

An initial evaluation of the request documentation may be simple if the buyer request is for a box of "off-the-shelf items". However, for more complex products and services, for example where integration, development, or designing a service activity is required, a more detailed evaluation of the request documentation will be needed.

- Review the request documents fully, from start to finish, and highlight any key points or particular work that it needed.

"I'm old fashioned and print out everything at the get-go. I then go through the whole document, highlighting and 'post-it noting' unusual items, and work with a long lead time" – experienced bid manager

- Determine what it is that the potential customer needs, and note down any initial thoughts or points that require clarification.
- If the document contains specialist sections such as Management, Technical, Commercial or Pricing, ensure that the appropriate people (if you have a larger organisation) evaluate each of these sections. This ensures that people who have expertise in the relevant areas can provide opinion on whether or not the bid can be won and if a contract could be successfully fulfilled.



Plan and manage the tender process

- Based on the assessments undertaken, make a preliminary decision on whether to proceed with bidding.
- Calculate the cost and effort of preparing the tender.
- If needed, request any clarifications from the point of contact in the tender documentation. Be mindful that clarification requests and their answers are most often sent to all potential tenderers.
- Start getting together long lead time items, such as quotes from subcontractors.
- If possible, delegate preparation of compliance tables and other clerical tasks.

1.4.3 Ongoing Planning

If you have decided to proceed with bidding, ongoing planning should include:

- Identifying the likely competitors, and preparing "ghosting" – analysing what their likely competitive advantages will be.
- Performing a competitor analysis based on the request/selection evaluation criteria (if provided) and buyer requirements.
- Identifying your own strengths and weaknesses in relation to the opportunity you are tendering for.
- Identifying the features of your product or service in each of the areas that are important to the buyer and determining how and where you are going to use them in your tender.
- Determining where you should be focusing most attention in accordance with any provided selection/evaluation criteria.
- Developing outlines for each section of the tender, ensuring that everything that needs to be answered or addressed is included.
- Developing a schedule for tendering.
- Completing a list of all the information that needs to be collected and/or included as attachments to the tender.

1. Tender Process

1.4.4 Risk Management

Risk management is a way to manage or contain the risks that are inherent in your tender, including the proposed approach to meeting the buyer's needs. Risk can be associated with cost, schedule, project management, technical solutions, performance, quality, customer support, and other aspects of your offer. The tender management process should identify and assess risks, in addition to determining how each risk will be mitigated and managed. In relation to the risks associated with your offer, the tender documentation should describe your risk management policy, the major risks, and your planned approach to managing those risks.

> Assess and manage risks

When looking at risks, try to think of how your organisation will be perceived by the buyer. If you are a small organisation bidding against larger competitors, you will be considered as being less capable of completing the work. You may want to emphasise areas such as commitment of the owner to ensure the work is completed, the ongoing work you hope to win for your organisation from the department or agency, and work of similar

size that you have completed. Obviously, work for government, local, state or federal, should be highlighted, demonstrating your ability to supply within their processes.

1.4.5 Pricing

Determining a pricing strategy for your tender is an important element of your tender strategy. Consideration should be given to the potential customer's budget or budget range and funding profile (if known), likely competitor pricing, and your actual costs and profit margins. The objective is to price your tender to win.

The buyer will be looking for the best outcome that meets their needs and value expectations, at a price they can afford and are willing to pay. Price is what you charge for a product or service, value is a little more intangible and is the buyer's perception of what the product or service is worth. Examples of value are the time taken to fulfil a contract, the perceived quality of the product or service, or the customer service that might be provided.

> Determine your pricing strategy

"We figure we can charge a 20% premium to our competitors, because the customer knows that we will deliver on time. I've even had them complaining about the price while signing the contract. But the pen keeps moving – they know we offer value" – project engineer

As the tenderer, you will need to offer a price that is acceptable to the buyer, whilst providing value for money, and being able to make a profit.

1. Tender Process

1.4.6 Review

Just like any document, reviewing your tender documentation is an important way to improve your tender. Reviewing should include:

Review your tender documentation

- Running the grammar and spelling checker.
- Checking consistency of style and layout including references, graphics, tables, headings, sequences, and links.
- Proofreading to ensure the documentation is ready for print; checking the documentation for typographical errors, correct layout and formatting, prior to, or after, the first print of your final draft.
- Making sure that headings are not at the bottom of a page; if necessary, force a page break before the heading.
- Ensuring that graphics are associated with the text that refers to them.

Following production of the document, every printed page should be checked prior to delivery – it is amazing how errors are visible on the printed page, but not on the screen.

Many large organisations reach the start of the reviewing stage – reviewing the pricing and what will be supplied – about two thirds of the way through the tender response time.

1.4.7 Production

Production of the tender is the final step in the tender management process. Work on the assumption that your tender's presentation represents the quality of your products and services.

Plan the production of your tender

Production considerations include:

- Planning the tender production early in the tendering process.
- Ensuring that the document/s are produced in accordance with exactly how the buyer wants to receive them or how the request documentation has stated they are to be produced and delivered (whether this be uploaded online, on CD ROM, emailed or even printed).
- Determining how hard and soft copies will be managed, named and stored.
- Keeping control of the draft and final documents.
- Ensuring that enough time has been scheduled for reviews of your documents in the draft stage, the final documentation stage, and prior to submission.

2. Tender Content and Layout Considerations

2.1 Introduction

Tender content and layout considerations are important. You may have the best product or solution to meet the buyer's requirements, but you need to explain this to the reader. Make sure that you continue to reiterate your competitive advantages throughout, and explain why what you are offering meets or exceeds the customer's requirements.

Repeating sentences like "Our product's specification is 12, which more than meets the requirement for 10" may seem tedious, but reinforces the message that your product meets what the customer needs.

In addition, make sure that you explain why something is stated, e.g. "We have installed into 10,000 houses in South Australia" may be a fact, but it is better to state "We have installed into 10,000 houses in South Australia, making us the largest installer in South Australia. Because of our large installed base, we understand the needs of the full range of South Australian houses, from villas through to post war brick homes and modern structures" provides a much richer understanding of the benefit of your work.

2.2 Structure and Content

Requests will very often stipulate (in the form of provided templates or specific instructions) how to document your response.

Any set criteria must be followed, or your tender may get set aside for not being compliant with the request instructions, or in the best case, will be more difficult to follow than other tenders.

"We liked your bid, because it followed our format, and was easy to understand. The other bidders seemed to make it a treasure hunt to get the information we needed"

– bid reviewer to successful bidder

> Develop a tender that meets all the tender request and buyer's requirements, provides what the buyer wants and needs, is stylish, and easy and interesting to read

Address the specific criteria concisely and ensure that "the question" has been "answered" using the same categories / headings and numbering format as the buyer's (if it makes sense in the context of the tender). Include all the mandatory forms, contracts, schedules and sections outlined in the request documentation.



2. Tender Content and Layout Considerations

If the request documentation allows some freedom in the structure of your response the following is an example of what may be included in your tender:

- Cover Sheet/Title Page.
- Table of Contents.
- List of Figures.
- List of Attachments.
- Executive Summary.
- Introduction.
- Proposed Solution or Offer.
- Expertise, Qualifications and Experience of Key Personnel (summaries only or a table format).
- Risk Management.
- Pricing, Terms and Conditions .
- Quality Management/Assurance.
- References (seek prior approval from referees).
- Point of Contact.
- List of Abbreviations.
- Glossary of Terms.
- Attachments (may include): Full Organisation Profile, Certificates, Organisation CVs of Relevant Personnel, Full product/service descriptive documents, Additional Graphics, Schedule, Additional Plans, Brochures (relevant and referenced within the Tender), Pricing Details and/or Pricing Tables, Detailed Terms and Conditions, Payment Schedule.

2.3 Layout and Design

The layout and design of your tender is an indicator of your professionalism and should be stylish, easy to read and have a sales focus.

- Follow any instructions that the buyer has provided in relation to page and document layout, particularly when templates for completion have been provided.
- Use a style sheet or word processing template; it ensures consistency throughout your document.
- Leave white space within your document to maximise readability and to emphasise key points.
- Establish a consistent system for headers, footers, headings, captions, lists and any other page design features.
- Use graphics and photos wherever possible.
- Use left justified text (not fully justified) as it creates page interest to the reader.
- Maintain consistency with fonts throughout the tender documentation, and choose a simple font – they are easier to read.
- Highlighting in bold, capitals, underlining or italics can be used, but be judicious in how, and how frequently, they are used.
- Always include page numbers in your document.

- Ensure that your page breaks are sensible throughout the document. If your paragraph needs to flow onto the next page, always allow more than two lines of text to flow onto the next page. Never leave a heading on a page with its text starting on the next.

2.4 Headings

Headings enable evaluators to quickly navigate quickly through your tender. They also help to break up the pages in your document, providing readability, and informative headings can be used to convey selling points. However, when using major headings, always use the same headings as that provided in the request documentation. For example, if the buyer has asked you to explain your Management Plan, then use the heading “Management Plan”. Informative headings can then be used as sub-headings. These headings can describe the contents of the section, highlighting benefits to the buyer.

Headings should be numbered; this enables the Table of Contents to be generated easily and for sections to be referenced. Use the numbering system to support the levels of headings within the document. It must be easy for someone to find what they want, from the Table of Contents and the headings.

2. Tender Content and Layout Considerations

2.5 Graphics and Photographs

Graphics and photographs are an excellent way to capture the attention of the readers of your tender. Readers often skim through lengthy proposals, looking at items that “catch their eye” first. These things will tend to be headings, call-outs, captions and the Executive Summary. People are also most likely to recall a graphic or photograph rather than what they read in text. Graphics or photographs used should emphasise your competitive advantages and solution, preferably showing your product or service.

“I reviewed a bid for an IT system. I couldn’t find a single screen shot of the product in the tender, just pages of text” – bid reviewer

 Use headings, graphics and photographs, captions, and colour

Graphics should be understandable. Introduce graphics and photographs in the text before they appear in your tender, reference them by figure number, always try to orientate them to be read vertically (if that is not possible, place them on their own page), include a caption with every graphic and photograph, and use colour.

When using photographs, ensure that the resolution of the digital photograph is such that it can be printed clearly. Ensure compliance with any copyright restrictions and licensing agreements when using stock photos, scanned photos, or photos from the Internet.

Use quotes from customers where possible, either by name or title of person. These provide reference points for your tender, and reinforce your ability to deliver.

2.6 Captions

Use captions underneath every graphic, photograph, table, chart and spreadsheet within your tender. Captions provide a description of the graphic and should also explain the relevant benefits of your product / service / solution, e.g. “Facility in Adelaide – this site has 10% more users than the one needed in this tender, demonstrating our ability to deliver these mid-sized systems.”

2.7 Abbreviations

Ensure that any abbreviations, shortened forms, or acronyms used within your tender documentation are defined in full in the first instance of their use. A correct way of doing this is to write the full name, or words, followed by the abbreviation or acronym in parentheses. An evaluator may not readily understand an abbreviation or acronym that is commonly used in your industry or organisation. Acronyms are particularly common in the technology sector and many acronyms have multiple meanings. If there are many abbreviations, it is good practice to also place abbreviations and acronyms in a table, in alphabetical order, at the end of the tender so as an evaluator can easily find them if needed.

Ensure that abbreviations and acronyms are consistent across all your tender documentation.

2. Tender Content and Layout Considerations

2.8 Colour

The use of colour in tenders can enhance the readability of the document and add interest. However, be aware your tender may be read as a black and white copy. Colour should be used to create emphasis, such as in graphics or call-out boxes. Be mindful of the colours that you use; readers with poor eyesight generally have difficulty reading red font, for example. Keep your colours to a small set.

2.9 Executive Summary

The Executive Summary is an important section of your document. It should be the first section of your tender and is the section most likely to be thoroughly read by the buyer. The Executive Summary must clearly describe the solution to meet the buyer's requirements and emphasise the unique benefits of the solution, particularly over any competing solutions where relevant.

 **Include an Executive Summary**

“I read the executive summary and the price. Sorry, but I just don’t read the endless pages of past history which is irrelevant to my decision”

– private sector bid reviewer

The Executive Summary should:

- Be customer focused.
- Build on your tender strategy.
- Link your solution to the buyer’s vision and needs.
- Offer evidence of the solution’s claims.
- Show how the solution offers greater value than any competition.
- Be brief, and not include technical details.
- Be organised to be clear and persuasive.
- Be soundly written.

Do not use paragraph numbers, ensure it is left justified, and format it to promote interest to the reader, such as with the use of graphics, visuals and call-out boxes.

2.10 Relevant Experience/Past Performance

Quite often relevant experience and past performance information is requested. The way in which this can be described is up to the writer; however, try to provide supporting evidence whenever a claim is made. Experience and performance can also be described graphically. Ensure that you also provide comment on weaknesses known, or potentially known, by the buyer (your competitors will be sure to bring these to the buyer’s attention) and a way of doing this is to emphasise the lessons learned as a result of any perceived weakness.

Emphasise how the past experience will enable you to deliver for the customer, with little risk of overrun or delay.

2. Tender Content and Layout Considerations

2.11 Resumes

Individual resumes, or Curricula Vitae (CVs) should be included for those key staff who are being proposed to work on the tendered solution if you are successful. Whilst there is never any guarantee that those staff will still be available if you do win the contract, it does show the calibre of staff members who are being employed and indicates planning toward a successful outcome. Individuals should be named within the tender, and resumes should always be tailored for key positions required in your solution. Personal resumes should not be used. Resumes should be formatted in a standard way to suit your organisation, and should be relevant to the work your organisation does as a whole and to the positions that your staff hold and the skills they utilise. Organisation resumes, ideally, should only be a page in length. Key positions should be described in the main body of the tender and a summary of proposed key position holders included. It is good practice to avoid including photos of staff as part of their resume.

2.12 Annexes, Appendices and Attachments

Appendices (or Annexes) are documents that contain additional or supporting information in relation to a specific topic contained within the tender documentation. Attachments tend to be self-contained data additions to your bid such as Annual Reports, Marketing Brochures, Specifications, Plans and Procedures, etc. Appendices and Attachments should be numbered or lettered sequentially.

Do not expect these attachments to be read. It is not the job of the evaluator to search for information to understand your bid. If you particularly want someone to read an attachment, identify it in the main body of the text, e.g. "Clause 5.8 – Compliant. We have completed at least three contracts of this size. Reference Attachments C, D & E. Note in E, this job was for your department last year."

2.13 Cover Letter

Cover letters are commonly submitted with tenders. They should reflect the key points of your Executive Summary, emphasising the primary theme which ties to a buyer need. Cover Letters should only be about a page in length.



3. Writing Style

All tenders are a reflection of your organisation's products and services; as such the writing style should convey what you are trying to sell whilst meeting the documentation requirements of the buyer.

In addition, it is important that you link the prospective customer's needs, wants and issues with what you are trying to sell. What you write should be customer focused and easy to understand by any reader (including those who are not familiar with your industry, product or service). The style of your writing needs to be persuasive, as a tender document is a mix of a business or technical document, and a sales document. The tender document needs to be logical, well organised, factual, informative, concise and persuasive.

Writing style and the professionalism of the presentation will vary with industry sector – a bid for media communications strategy will have higher standards of presentation, than a bid to do some kerbing, for example.

Choosing correct words and aiming for shorter sentences makes tender documents more persuasive, effective and easier to read. Simplify or replace wordy phrases, use correct words in context, avoid words or phrases that increase contract risk, do not use clichés or sayings (e.g. "the big picture", "thinking outside the square"), minimise the use of words only used in your industry, and do not use redundant words (e.g. "past experience" (all experience is past!)).

Your tender should answer the question: "Why should they buy from you?" You need to show the features and advantages of your product or service and how these elements will benefit the buyer and fulfil their needs and vision.

 **Keep your writing style simple and be customer focused**

"You convinced us you understood what we wanted, and could deliver it – that's why you won" – government buyer

If you don't win the tender ...

Not winning a tender is not a sign of failure; there can usually only be one successful tenderer. Use not winning as an opportunity to review your unsuccessful tendering as a lessons learned activity.

As discussed, SA Government tenders are subject to strict probity rules. It is not possible to reduce the price after tenders are read, or to add extra features or services.

Seek a debriefing session with the key SA Government contact (the buyer) so that s/he can outline the strengths and weaknesses of your submission. Buyers are human, and don't like confrontation or handing out bad news, any more than the rest of us. They also may (rightly or wrongly) feel that their words may open themselves up to some form of litigation.

While there have been overturned tender results, they are extremely rare. Go into a discussion cheerful and positive, and listen; don't try to rerun the tender process. Ask what you would need to do to have a winning bid next time, which is an easier discussion for everyone than a litany of faults with your tender.

Sometimes it is just price that decides a tender, but the buyer should also be able to discuss other parts of your tender as well, even if, on this occasion, they were not the determining factor.

4. Conclusion

Tender writing requires more than just pricing a job, and submitting that price to the buyer.

It is about preparation, both before and during the tender period, so that you respond to the buyer with reasons why s/he should select your organisation's proposal.

How you present your proposal is a vital part of that process. A well-articulated tender that fully answers the buyer's questions demonstrates your interest in winning the contract.

Showing how your organisation has completed similar contracts, and has thought through how it will complete this contract, minimises the perceived risk in choosing your solution.

A strong relationship with the buyer from before the tendering period, combined with a well prepared tender, provides the best opportunity for success in bidding.

 **Seek feedback**