

EVALUATION POLICY

(PROCUREMENT AND GRANTS FRAMEWORK)

P012
2021
VERSION: 1.0

PURPOSE

This policy is part of the Procurement and Grant Framework and establishes how the Secretariat calls for and evaluates the award of grants and applications for tenders for goods, services and capital works.

APPLICATION

Applies to all staff and individuals involved in the Engagement Process of the Procurement and Grants Framework.

POLICY

The Secretariat is committed to ensuring that the evaluation of applications and selection of successful application is conducted in a manner that meets the principles outline in the Procurement and Grant polices for the procurement of goods, services and capital works and the award of grants.

RESPONSIBILITY

Team Leader
Finance, Asset Management, Procurement and Travel under the directions of Director Operations.

1 General

- 1.1 The call for applications and the subsequent evaluation of those applications are two critical stages in the overall process of identifying persons or organisations to either provide specific services or goods for the Secretariat or to be awarded a grant.
- 1.2 The overall process must be:
 - (a) fair, impartial and in accordance with the evaluation criteria approved as part of the initial approval process under the Procurement Policy or Grants Policy and Procedures; and
 - (b) carefully recorded to ensure integrity and clear evidence that the process has been open, transparent, secure and confidential.

2 Methods of submission of applications

- 2.1 The Secretariat has two accepted methods for submission of applications:
 - (a) electronically through a e-tender platform; or
 - (b) physical hardcopy either postal mail or hand delivery
- 2.2 The electronic submission method should be the preferred method unless the use of the physical hardcopy is justified by the requesting staff member.
- 2.3 Submission of applications by postal mail or hand delivery must be in the form of a sealed envelope and addressed in accordance with the directions specified in the call for applications.

3 Call for applications

- 3.1 To ensure the widest participation and the requisite transparency, staff must ensure that calls for applications include or provide a supplementary guidelines document that includes the following information:
 - (a) Purpose and objective of the action;



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- (b) The types of activities to be funded (if relevant);
- (c) Eligible costs for financing (if relevant);
- (d) Information and format required;
- (e) Instructions and procedures for applying;
- (f) Summary of the evaluation process to be followed including an indicative timetable;
- (g) Contractual conditions applying to the successful applicant;
- (h) A point of contact that can answer questions by applicants;
- (i) Methods for submission of applications;
- (j) Address for submission of applications (electronic or physical address);
- (k) Eligibility criteria;
- (l) Evaluation criteria;
- (m) Time and date deadline, including the country to which the time and date refers;
- (n) Pre-application briefing (if any);
- (o) Any other relevant information, including application form (if any) and agreement template.

3.2 Staff must ensure that initial calls for applications under a multi-stage method:

- (a) Only requests information, including the following, which are necessary to support a shortlisting process:
 - (i) What the applicant can provide;
 - (ii) The applicant's qualifications and previous experience; and
 - (iii) Describes the pre-qualification process, including the following:
 - (iv) Nature and scope of the contract or award;
 - (v) Details of the documents available, including documents that give specific description of the contract or award;
- (b) Information and format required;
 - (i) Contact point for further information;
 - (ii) Closing date and time;
 - (iii) Address to which expressions or registrations of interest must be sent and the method of submission (i.e post or email).

3.3 The Procurement Team will:

- (a) consider the best way to manage receipt of applications;
- (b) consider how applications will be managed internally;
- (c) ensure that all documents related to a call for applications are uploaded on to the e-tender platform and Secretariat's website or ; and
- (d) coordinate a method by which answers provided to questions of potential applicants before the deadline are uploaded to a FAQ mechanism that can be accessed by potential applicants.

3.4 Calls for applications must include the following disclaimer:

"In the event that further information is required by the Secretariat in relation to the [insert whether it is a proposal, bid or grant application], the Secretariat reserves the right to seek the required information without the need for calling for resubmission of proposals".

3.5 Calls for application must provide sufficient information about how the action will be awarded and managed, the method of payment, guarantees (where relevant), and how to submit complaints in regard to the procurement process. All complaints must be directed to the internal auditor or to the staff member that

manages the internal auditor independent from the responsible staff member, unless agreed to otherwise by the Secretary General.

- 3.6 Staff must be conscious of keeping application costs low and they must not seek information from that applicants that is of little relevance to the evaluation process.
- 3.7 Calls for applications must be uploaded to and advertised on the Secretariat's website for a minimum of two weeks and any change to them must be published as well. Calls for applications for awards or contracts exceeding FJD100,000 must be advertised for a minimum of 1 month.
- 3.8 Other relevant tender portals or national and international publications and media sources may be sought for advertisement purposes depending on the risk and expected cost of the procurement. If the tender or call for application is low cost and low risk, tender will be placed on the Secretariat's website and circulated through the Secretariat's extensive contact listing.
- 3.9 Staff must liaise with the either the Information Management Team or Public Affairs Team to ensure that all calls for applications are circulated to relevant contact listing and networks.

4 Management of applications

- 4.1 The Procurement Team has the overall responsibility for managing all information related to this policy. Staff must ensure that all relevant information procured under this policy is submitted to the Procurement Team for filing.
- 4.2 Applications received electronically must be managed by the Procurement Team unless an alternative method was devised depending on the nature of the action. The Procurement Team or relevant person must not open or forward any application to any other person until after the deadline date and the official opening of applications.
- 4.3 All submitted and received applications must be registered as follows by the staff member receiving the applications:
 - (a) electronically, if the application was received electronically; or
 - (b) if the application was received by postal mail or hand delivery:
 - (i) The time and date must be written or stamped on the application; and
 - (ii) It must be initialed by the person receiving the application on behalf of the Secretariat.
- 4.4 Electronic applications must be converted into PDF format and filed electronically after the deadline date and the official opening of the applications.
- 4.5 The Procurement Team must create and maintain a secure electronic working folder for the filing of all electronic applications.
- 4.6 Applications received by postal mail or hand delivery must be kept in secured applications box as soon as it has been registered. The applications box must be kept at reception during working hours and securely stored after hours.
- 4.7 The Procurement Team must ensure the security of the applications box.
- 4.8 All applications received electronically, by postal mail or hand delivery must not be opened until after the deadline date for submission. If the call for applications is cancelled before the opening, the postal and hand delivered applications must be returned unopened. Electronic applications must be sent back electronically.
- 4.9 All opening of electronic, postal mail or hand delivered applications must be in the presence of at least 2 evaluators (if there are at least 2 evaluators) or in the presence of another staff member. The purpose of the opening is to check that the applications are generally in order. At the completion of the opening of applications, evaluators must record in a short file note the following:
 - (a) How the tenders were received;

- (b) Who opened the tenders and the names of everyone present at the opening; and
 - (c) How the original tender documents are filed for security.
- 4.10 Staff must take appropriate measures to ensure all applications are kept confidential and only shared on a 'need to know' basis.

5 Evaluation

General

- 5.1 Evaluators must evaluate applications in accordance with the relevant principles stipulated in the Procurement Policy and Procedures or the Grants Policy and Procedures.
- 5.2 Evaluators must strictly adhere to instructions given to applicants in the call for applications by assessing applications only in the following order:
 - (a) The eligibility criteria; and
 - (b) The evaluation criteria.

Eligibility Criteria

- 5.3 The eligibility criteria refers to the minimum standards, including the following, which the applicant must meet to be considered for the contract or award:
 - (a) Restrictions provided in the Procurement Policy and the Grants Policy and Procedures;
 - (b) Legal and administrative status;
 - (c) Rules on nationality and age;
 - (d) Minimum requirements or qualifications or years of experience;
 - (e) Specifically for grant awards, eligible actions such as type of activities, sectors, and geographical areas;
 - (f) Requirements for meeting of deadline for submission of tenders; and
 - (g) Requirements to address specific issues that may be required by call for applications.
- 5.4 Upon assessment on the above criteria, the eligibility assessment must be marked with a FAIL or PASS grade.
- 5.5 Notwithstanding 5.1 and 5.2, evaluators after careful consideration may allocate a PASS for applicants who do not strictly satisfy some of the more basic eligibility criteria. For example, a PASS may be awarded to an application where the lapse in the submission deadline was very minor and there were limited submissions. By contrast, the specific eligibility criteria stated in the Grants Policy and Procedures, and the Procurement Policy must not be waived in any circumstances.

Evaluation Criteria

- 5.6 The evaluation criteria used by evaluators must be the same as the evaluation criteria in the call for applications. When preparing the call for applications, the responsible staff member should set evaluation criteria which are proportional to the subject matter of the tender or grant.
- 5.7 Evaluation ratings must be made on the basis of the information requested and included in the application.
- 5.8 Evaluators must decide before carrying out the evaluation exercise whether to provide their marking as a collective group or individually scored and totalled.
- 5.9 If the marking is scored individually and totalled, the accumulated score must be adjusted to reflect a proportionate score out of 100.
- 5.10 To ensure consistency, evaluators must evaluate tenders according to the predefined marking sheet template, or in the absence of one, a marking sheet developed by the evaluators (examples of which can be obtained from the Procurement Team).
- 5.11 The evaluation criteria consist of two categories: technical and financial (price). In evaluating applications, the following general rules must be used:

- (a) for consultancies:
 - (i) Applications that do not achieve at least half the available points for the technical evaluation must not be considered as competent enough to complete the assignment, and must be excluded from further evaluation;
 - (ii) The maximum score available for price must be awarded to the lowest technically suitable application, and other applications must be awarded proportionate scores for price by using the following the formula:

$$\frac{\text{Price of Lowest Priced Technically Suitable Application} \times 20\%}{\text{Applicants Estimated Price}}$$
 - (iii) The successful application will be the applicant with the highest accumulated score among all the applicants. This applicant should generally be the one submitting the least expensive offer classified as 'technically compliant' during the technical evaluation.
- (b) for grants, goods and capital works:
 - (i) Applications that do not achieve at least half the available points for technical evaluation must not be considered as competent enough to be awarded the grant or contract, and must be excluded from further evaluation;
 - (ii) The successful application must be the one with the highest accumulated score among all the applications.

5.12 A written report of the evaluation must contain the following for approval:

- (a) Overview of how the evaluation was conducted;
- (b) The specific procedures adopted;
- (c) Summary of the scoring;
- (d) The recommendation on the preferred applicant that was evaluated in accordance with this policy;
- (e) Attachment of completed and signed marking sheets.

General rules

- 5.13 To protect the integrity of the procurement evaluation, all communication between an evaluator and a potential applicant must be formal.
- 5.14 In the interest transparency, information provided to an in the call for applications and evaluations process that may provide that applicant with a competitive edge must be made available to all other applicants. This should be done via a Q&A mechanism on the Secretariat's website.
- 5.15 Where relevant, applications must be subject to formal referee checks.
- 5.16 Applicants must not provide additional information after the deadline unless additional information is required of applicants to assist evaluators finalize their assessment. Where appropriate, the Procurement Team to provide additional information should be provided to all applicants still in the running for the contract or award.
- 5.17 Staff must ensure that a contractual situation is not inadvertently created during the evaluation process and if in doubt, must seek the advice of the Legal Team.

6 Re-evaluating tenders

- 6.1 In the event, where an award has been made or contract implementation is already well advanced when the successful awardee notifies the Secretariat of a change to the arrangements or the Secretariat becomes aware of a reason to terminate the contract, other than for reasons of non-performance, staff must analyse the consequences of terminating the contract or accepting the change proposed, in particular, assess whether the change is substantial or not (i.e. if it requires to terminate the contract and launch a new procurement process or not).

7 Conflict of interest

- 7.1 Evaluators must ensure that the evaluation process is above suspicion of actual or perceived conflict of interest.
- 7.2 Any actual or perceived conflict of interest that arises during the evaluation process must be declared and discussed with other evaluators or with the relevant approving authority as soon as it arises.

8 SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES

- 8.1 Notwithstanding any clause in this Policy, the Secretary General at any time may at his/her discretion where the policy is silent or ambiguous make a judgment call.
- 8.2 Notwithstanding any clause in this Policy, the Secretary General at any time may at his/her discretion deviate from this policy should the circumstances deem necessary.
- 8.3 A staff member who is delegated authority under the Delegations Policy 2021 will be able to exercise powers within the scope granted.

DEFINITIONS

This section is used to describe the meaning of a word, phrase, acronym or other set of symbols that is being used in the context of this policy.

application means collectively, all tender documents, expression of interests and bids under the Procurement Policy and Procedures and all applications for grants under the Grants Policy and Procedures;

call for application means collectively, all advertisements calling for tenders, expressions of interest, and bids under the Procurement and Tendering Policy and Procedures and all advertisements calling for applications under the Grants Policy and Procedures;

evaluators mean any staff member or independent person approved under either the Procurement Policy and Procedures or the Grants Policy and Procedures to evaluate applications.

REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed periodically after the effective date or when necessary.

HISTORY

Approved: 12th November 2021

Effective: 12th November 2021

Authorisation: Acting Secretary General – Dr. Filimon M Manoni

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Secretariat's Code of Conduct and Values 2018

Delegations Policy 2021

Procurement Policy 2021

Grant Policy 2021

Enterprise Risk Management Policy 2021

Personal Information Protection Policy 2021

Sub-Delegations Policy and Procedures 2014

REPEALS

Evaluation Policy and Procedure 2014 PTG-04-14

Procurement and Tendering Policy and Procedure 2014 PTG-01-14

Grants Policy and Procedure 2014 PTG-02-14