Building your best tender response

Table of Contents

[Purpose 3](#_Toc201582887)

[What does the Australian Government buy? 4](#_Toc201582888)

[Commonwealth Procurement Rules 5](#_Toc201582889)

[Procurement methods 6](#_Toc201582890)

[Standing offer (panel) 7](#_Toc201582891)

[Whole of Australian Government Arrangements 7](#_Toc201582892)

[Where to find Procurement Opportunities 8](#_Toc201582893)

[Approach to Market (ATM) 9](#_Toc201582894)

[Elements of an ATM 9](#_Toc201582895)

[Preparation 10](#_Toc201582896)

[Before you respond to an ATM 11](#_Toc201582897)

[Review the ATM 12](#_Toc201582898)

[Procurement Connected Policies 13](#_Toc201582899)

[Questions 14](#_Toc201582900)

[Briefing sessions 15](#_Toc201582901)

[Response format 15](#_Toc201582902)

[Statement of requirement 15](#_Toc201582903)

[Evaluation criteria 16](#_Toc201582904)

[Supplier Code of Conduct 16](#_Toc201582905)

[Terms and conditions 17](#_Toc201582906)

[Referees 17](#_Toc201582907)

[Before you lodge 18](#_Toc201582908)

[Tender writing tips 18](#_Toc201582909)

[Things to watch out for 21](#_Toc201582910)

[Common pitfalls 22](#_Toc201582911)

[Check 22](#_Toc201582912)

[Resources and contacts 23](#_Toc201582913)

[Feedback 23](#_Toc201582914)

[Have further questions or want to get in touch? 24](#_Toc201582915)

# Purpose

This session will provide you with practical steps for preparing and developing tender responses for Australian Government procurement opportunities. The workshop will cover key topics including how Australian Government organisations approach the market, considerations for responding to an approach to market, tender writing tips, and common pitfalls.

If you are interested in selling to the Australian Government, this session will provide valuable insights to enhance your tender response approach and increase your understanding of how the Australian Government buys goods and services.

**What you’ll learn**

* a brief overview of the Commonwealth Procurement Framework
* how Australian Government organisations approach the market
* best practices for responding to an approach to market
* tender writing tips and key elements for a successful response
* common pitfalls and how to avoid them.

This session complements resources and information available on the Selling to Government website ([sellingtogov.finance.gov.au](http://sellingtogov.finance.gov.au/)).

If you are interested in supplying to the Australian Government, visit [sellingtogov.finance.gov.au](http://sellingtogov.finance.gov.au/) to find out more.

# What does the Australian Government buy?

Australian Government organisations purchase a **variety of goods and services for delivery across Australia**, including in regional and remote areas.

The easiest way to find out what Australian Government organisations are interested in buying, is to visit [**AusTender**](https://www.tenders.gov.au/), the Australian Government’s central procurement information system. AusTender is a website, run by the Department of Finance, where you can find what Australian Government organisations intend to buy, are out to market for, and who they are contracting with.

All government departments must have an Annual Procurement plan, which is regularly updated, which indicates the procurement's they are planning to undertake each financial year. This may provide some indication to you about projects you may be able to tender for, or be involved in.

The [AusTender Help and Information Centre](https://help.tenders.gov.au/) also includes a **variety of guidance and reports** to help you better understand opportunities in your sector.

**Top 5 categories for small and medium enterprises in 2023-24**

Management and Business Professionals and Administrative Services - 13,582 contracts awarded 49.1% of category

Engineering and Research and Technology Based Services - 6,659 contracts awarded 54.1% of category

Commercial and Military and Private Vehicles and their Accessories and Components - 3,145 contracts awarded 53.0% of category

Information Technology Broadcasting and Telecommunications - 2,902 contracts awarded 43.4% of category

Education and Training Services - 2,639 contracts awarded 61.2% of category

# Commonwealth Procurement Rules

The Australian Government is **accountable** for how its entities spend
**taxpayer money**.

The Australian Government is accountable for how its organisations spend public money. To ensure procurement processes demonstrate the highest standards of ethics, probity and integrity, the Government has the Commonwealth Procurement Rules, also known as the CPRs. The CPRs reflect the Australian Government’s policies, expectations and rules for buyers to ensure the proper use of public funds, and that procurement processes are open, fair, and ethical.

Achieving value for money is the core rule of the CPRs. Achieving value for money is critical in ensuring that public resources are used in the most efficient, effective, ethical and economic manner.

The CPRs also set out the Australian Government’s commitment to leverage its purchasing power, to realise broader economic, social and environmental benefits for Australia.

The CPRs are part of a larger procurement framework which organisations apply and includes government policy, web-based guidance, templates and tools.

The procurement framework is devolved. This means there is a single framework with a single set of rules that organisations must comply with, but they are able to undertake their procurement activities in a manner which best suits their business needs.

Becoming familiar with the CPRs will help you understand how buyers conduct procurement activities. This in turn will help you to develop better tender responses.

There are some key terms and requirements you might wish to familiarise yourself with. There are also policy levers which enable buyers to directly engage small businesses and Indigenous owned businesses.

**Link**: [Commonwealth Procurement Rules | Department of Finance](https://www.finance.gov.au/government/procurement/commonwealth-procurement-rules)

# Procurement methods

Australian Government procurement is conducted by **open tender** or **limited tender.**

**Open Tender**

Advertised publicly and open to any supplier to respond.

**Open tender** involves publishing an open approach to market and inviting submissions. These are advertised publicly and open to any supplier to respond. Open tenders are advertised on AusTender.

Open tender is the default method for purchases with an expected value over:

* + - $80,000 for non-corporate Commonwealth entities – these are government organisations which don’t make money, generally with Department in their name.
		- $400,000 for prescribed corporate Commonwealth entities – these are organisations that can charge for their services, such as CSIRO.
		- $7.5 million for procurement of construction services.

The expected value of a procurement must be estimated before a decision on the procurement method is made. The maximum value, including GST, includes options, extensions, renewals, or other mechanisms that may be executed over the life of the contract.

**Limited Tender**

A limited number of potential suppliers are directly invited to respond.

**Limited tender** involves approaching one or more potential suppliers to make submissions, when the process does not meet the rules for open tender. Only the suppliers that are approached can respond, it is not open to all suppliers. Limited tender is permitted for:

* purchases that are below open tender expected values
* purchases under specific conditions or exemptions as permitted by in the Commonwealth Procurement Rules (CPRs).

Finance strongly encourages organisations to use open tendering by default. This maximises competition and gives more businesses an opportunity to participate.

# Standing offer (panel)

A standing offer is an arrangement with an Australian Government organisation, or group of Australian Government organisations, that sets out the **terms and conditions** under which a supplier agrees to provide a range of **goods or services** for a specified period.

A standing offer arrangement with multiple suppliers is commonly known as a panel.

Potential suppliers submit a response to an approach to market and indicate their willingness and ability to supply the goods or services at a particular rate and / or cost. Potential suppliers that demonstrate value for money in their response are invited to enter a ‘deed of standing offer’ with the Australian Government organisation.

Where there are multiple suppliers appointed under a standing offer arrangement, it is commonly called a **‘panel’**. Generally, the ‘deed of standing offer’ will be the same for each supplier on the panel.

Once a panel has been established, the organisation can seek quotes to obtain goods or services covered by that panel.

When procuring from a panel or standing offer arrangement, organisations are encouraged to approach multiple businesses that are appointed to that standing offer.

**Link**: [Understanding panel arrangements | Selling to Government](https://sellingtogov.finance.gov.au/faq/understand-panel-arrangements)

# Whole of Australian Government Arrangements

When considering what procurement method is most appropriate, government organisations must first determine whether the goods or services they are looking to procure are subject to a Whole of Australian Government Arrangement.

Whole of Australian Government (WoAG) Arrangements are set up for Australian Government organisations to use when procuring certain types of goods or services. These are established by either coordinated or cooperative procurements and are intended to ensure more efficient processes to deliver better prices, service, and quality for the Australian Government.

Coordinated procurement arrangements offer increased transparency, standard terms and conditions and contract management benefits for government and suppliers.

**Coordinated arrangements** are for goods and services commonly used by the Australian Government and are mandatory for most government organisations to use. These arrangements cover various types of goods and services including, but not limited to, travel and accommodation, stationery and office supplies, legal services, management advisory services, and ICT. A list of current WoAG coordinated arrangements is available on the Finance website.

**Cooperative arrangements** are optional for use and occur where multiple organisations agree to purchase similar goods or services cooperatively. These generally result in standing offer (panel) arrangements. The search functionality on AusTender can help you identify existing cooperative arrangements – use the ‘multi-agency access’ search functionality.

Link: [Understanding panel arrangements | Selling to Government](https://sellingtogov.finance.gov.au/faq/understand-panel-arrangements)

# Where to find Procurement Opportunities

As WoAG arrangements are generally panels with a large number of participating suppliers, these arrangements provide a good opportunity for businesses to be approached by Australian Government organisations for work.

To ensure you are aware of any new and upcoming WoAG arrangements, including refresh opportunities, we strongly encourage you to register on AusTender and review Annual Procurement Plans.

Annual Procurement Plans include information about upcoming planned procurements over the next 12 months for that organisation, including the subject matter of the procurement, the estimated financial year quarter of the approach to market (ATM), whether the procurement will potentially allow multi-organisation access, and the goods and services category code.

For example, the Department of Finance publishes planned procurement details for the WoAG arrangements it manages, including the Management Advisory Services Panel and People Panel. To ensure you are notified of any updates for planned procurements, you can ‘watch’ opportunities by clicking the star icon in the Annual Procurement Plan.

New Panels and WoAG arrangements, including refreshes, are normally established by an open tender Approach to Market. If your response to the ATM is considered to represent value for money, your business may be invited to enter into a deed of standing offer, and be appointed to the panel.

**AusTender**

The Australian Government publishes **WoAG procurement opportunities** and **notices** of standing offers and successful contracts, valued at or above $10,000, on AusTender.

* + - Register for free
		- Receive information about new procurement opportunities
		- Review annual procurement plans
		- Watch planned procurements
		- Look for refresh opportunities

# Approach to Market (ATM)

An Approach to Market (ATM) is a **notice inviting potential suppliers** to participate in a procurement including, but not limited to:

* + a request for tender
	+ a request for quote
	+ expression of interest
	+ request for information
	+ request for proposal.

Where possible, entities should approach more than one supplier when using a Panel

The approach to market can be undertaken via a formal or non-formal approach to potential suppliers.

**Formal approach** – A formal approach to market generally involves issuing documentation to potential suppliers that outlines the work to be undertaken and details all the requirements that a supplier will need to meet when providing a tender response. Open tender procurements typically require a formal approach to market.

**Non-formal approach** - Not all purchases require a formal ATM and tender response process. This is dependent on the complexity and risk of the purchase. For simple procurements that are under the expected value, buyers might seek a quote and information regarding availability from a limited number of potential suppliers. A non-formal approach is generally used when government organisations are conducting a limited tender

**Panel approach** –buyers may approach suppliers through a panel, provided the tendered work is within the scope of the standing offer. To maximise competition, buyers are encouraged to approach multiple potential suppliers, where possible. Buyers must then select the response that represents the best value for money.

Being on a panel is not a guarantee that you will be approached. For context, some panels have hundreds of potential suppliers, so make sure you invest in promoting your businesses’ capability and capacity.

# Elements of an Approach to Market (ATM)

Elements usually found in an ATM:

**Statement of the requirement** – Describes the goods or services being procured, including:

* the nature and scope of the work – statement of requirement
* deliverables or expected outcomes
* specifications – performance, functional, and technical
* installation, training, support, or maintenance needs
* timeframes for delivery of goods or services
* options for extensions or additional work.

**Conditions for participation** – The minimum requirements you must meet to be considered for the work. If you do not meet these requirements, your submission will not be considered. These are included to make sure you have the legal, financial, technical or commercial capabilities to deliver the work.

**Evaluation criteria and methodology** – Your submission will be assessed against the evaluation criteria. The request document should also describe the evaluation methodology including, for example, whether tenders will be shortlisted before a successful supplier is chosen.

**Minimum content and format** – What information is to be included in your submission and the format to use. Examples are providing certificates of insurance, using certain schedules or submitting an electronic response.

**Process rules** – Outlines how the tender will be run. Such as the deadline, and lodgement instructions.

**Draft contract** – A draft contract is usually included so you can clearly understand the requirements of the buyer and the terms and conditions under which the work will be delivered. You may need to indicate your willingness to comply with the clauses of the draft contract. Where you wish to negotiate alternative clauses, you must note these and provide justification.

# Preparation

Ensure you are sufficiently prepared, understand the process, and
common requirements.

Responding to an ATM requires time and effort. Take the time to ensure that you are sufficiently prepared and understand the process and common requirements, before responding to a tender opportunity.

If you would like to see what ATM documentation looks like, visit the AusTender website and download a current ATM for the type of goods or services that you are interested in supplying to the Australian Government. This is good preparation so that you see what it looks like, what you will be asked to provide, and gives you a sense of how long it might take to complete, before you are caught up in the pressure of responding.

Finance’s [Commonwealth Contracting Suite](https://www.finance.gov.au/government/procurement/commonwealth-contracting-suite-ccs) website also includes a sample CCS Approach to Market and Commonwealth Contract. These documents are provided for information only and are not to be used as templates.

# Before you respond to an Approach to Market (ATM)

Satisfy yourself the opportunity will be rewarding and cost-effective to pursue.

Before you respond to an ATM, make sure it is the **right opportunity** for you and is cost effective to pursue.

Developing a competitive response takes time and effort and there is no guarantee of success.

If you have been approached to provide a response to an ATM, and you do not have the capability or capacity to respond, it’s a good idea to let the ATM contact officer know so that they understand why you have elected not to participate. This is good relationship management.

Be prepared to explain your capability and what your business does. When responding to an ATM, you will need to provide information about your business, including who you are, what you do, and what sets you apart from your competitors. You must be able to clearly articulate this.

Some questions to ask yourself before preparing a response:

* Is this the right **opportunity** for your business?
* Do you understand all **the requirements**?
* Does your business have access to the necessary capability and capacity to **deliver** the required goods and or services?
* Are there any **briefings** offered, and can you attend?
* Do you have the time and ability to meet the response **deadline**?
* How, when, and where is the tender submission to be lodged?
* Do you have all **licences, required documentation, and evidence of compliance** with relevant policies at hand and ready to include in your submission?

Your tender response must be compliant and complete. If your submission does not demonstrate compliance with mandatory requirements, your submission can not be considered. Note the closing date for response and understand the lodgement time frames. You must meet the deadlines, as late tenders will not be accepted.

# Review the Approach to Market (ATM)

Review the ATM carefully

If you do not meet the minimum requirements your response will not be considered.

If you choose to respond to an ATM, you should prepare a response that complies with the requirements specified in the ATM. Each ATM is different – make sure you read the instructions and requirements carefully.

* Is it clear from the statement of requirements, what the organisation is seeking from the market?
	+ If not, ask questions.
	+ Don’t assume anything. The more clarity you have, the more targeted your submission will be.
	+ Some ATMs will specify a close off date for clarifications and questions so make sure to seek clarifications in time.
* What are the minimum content and format requirements?
* Are there any conditions for participation?
* Do potential suppliers need to comply with other relevant legislation or policy? For example, procurement connected policies
* What are the tender evaluation criteria and methodology? Understanding this can help you frame your response
* Are there any required standards or specifications which must be applied or qualified in your response?
* Have you linked what you propose to do or provide, to what the government is seeking to achieve?

# Procurement Connected Policies

**Procurement Connected Policies** (PCPs) place minimum requirements on businesses responding to tenders. There are a number of Australian Government **procurement connected policies** which are designed to achieve broader policy outcomes beyond the procurement requirement. Where these policies are relevant, the requirements will be specified in ATM documentation. There are value thresholds or other criteria that determine whether a policy applies. You **must** meet these minimum requirements to be considered for the work.

**PCPs that may be relevant to your business**

Workplace Gender Equality Procurement Principles

Indigenous Procurement Policy

Australian Industry Participation

Australian Skills Guarantee

Payment Times PCP

Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Policy

Shadow Economy PCP

Detailed information on these policies are available on [sellingtogov.finance.gov.au](https://sellingtogov.finance.gov.au/faq/minimum-requirements)

There is one PCP, to draw your attention to - the **Shadow Economy PCP.**

Businesses tendering for procurements valued at or above $4 million including GST, are required to provide a valid Statement of Tax Record from the Australian Taxation Office showing they have a valid satisfactory tax record. Please note that the policy prohibits the Australian Government from entering into a relevant contract with a business who cannot meet the requirements outlined in the policy.

This policy applies to open tenders and when awarded a contract, suppliers are required to maintain a valid and satisfactory Statement of Tax Record during the course of the contract.

**Note:** this requirement is often included in ATMs to establish or refresh panel arrangements.

This one is important because it is often required to get onto a panel arrangement. Once you have it, it is valid for 12 months and is simple to renew. If you plan to get onto a panel, then it is important to obtain your Statement of Tax Record sooner rather than later, so you don’t get caught out and miss out on any opportunities.

# Questions

ATM documents will include information about how to seek clarifications. They will also include a nominated point of contact. If you have questions about the ATM while it is out to market, you can ask questions and have them answered.

Many ATMs will include a close-out time for questions. Make sure to submit any questions or requests for clarification well in advance of the close-out time.

When asking questions, please be aware that while you won’t be identified, your question and the answer will be provided to interested parties (this would typically be all AusTender registered users who downloaded ATM documents).

Addenda form part of the ATM documents and must be considered and / or addressed when developing your submission.

For ATM processes being conducted through AusTender, the contact officer will collate the questions and answers and issue these as an Addendum to the ATM on AusTender.

AusTender registered users who have downloaded the ATM documents from AusTender will receive an email notification when an addendum is issued. Regardless of this, it is your responsibility to visit AusTender to see if any addenda have been issued.

For processes conducted outside AusTender, the ATM documents will detail the process for clarifications.

If you have questions about the ATM before it closes, you can ask questions and have them answered.

# Briefing sessions

Be sure to attend an industry briefing if it is offered.

If a procurement is significant in scope, scale or complexity, tendering organisations may hold an industry briefing session.

For open tenders, industry briefings are typically advertised on AusTender. Industry briefings provide potential suppliers with an opportunity to engage directly with procuring organisations and increase their understanding of the tender requirements or processes.

Industry briefings provide an opportunity to ask questions and hear what others in your sector are saying about the procurement. Wherever possible, you should attend industry briefings as they can help you determine whether the opportunity is right for you and help shape your submission.

Questions and answers from industry briefing sessions are typically collated and provided to all interested parties, either through AusTender or other channels – depending on how the procurement is being conducted.

# Response format

Many ATMs will include a template response for you to complete. You need to answer or provide a response to each of the criteria or elements of the template.

If a template is not included with the ATM, make sure you include all the mandatory requirements specified in the ATM.

If specific formatting is required, this should be clearly stated in the ATM.

Be sure that your response addresses all the minimum requirements and evaluation criteria, completes any mandatory forms, and contains enough information to assist the procuring organisation to understand your offer and how it represents value for money.

If in doubt about the format of your submission, reach out to the nominated ATM contact officer as soon as possible.

# Statement of requirement

The statement of requirement, or statement of work, is the document that outlines the details of the goods or services that the Australian Government organisation wishes to buy. The statement of requirement will outline the needs of the government and requirements for goods or services, including the nature and scope of work, deliverables, specifications, timeframes, and any options for extension or additional work.

It will be used in the tender evaluation process to assess the extent to which each potential supplier’s response addresses the requirements.

It will ultimately inform key elements in the contract under which delivery of the goods and services is managed.

This makes it a very important document, and you should pay careful attention to its contents.

# Evaluation criteria

Evaluation criteria are used to evaluate submissions and identify the supplier that can fulfil the procurement contract and provide the best value for money. Whenever a buyer goes to market, the ATM documents must include the criteria that will be used to evaluate submissions. This enables the proper identification, assessment and comparison of submissions on a fair, common and transparent basis.

Evaluation criteria can be weighted based on their importance. This could be indicated by each criterion being listed in its order of importance.

Evaluation criteria will likely include:

* financial and non-financial costs and benefits
* the quality and quantity of goods or services
* whether the goods or services are fit for purpose
* the supplier’s relevant experience and performance history and the expertise of the personnel who will perform the services
* flexibility of the proposal, including innovation and adaptability over the lifecycle of the procurement
* environmental sustainability of the proposed goods andservices, such as energy efficiency, environmental and climate change impact and the use of recycled products
* whole-of-life costs, which could include initial purchase price, maintenance, operating, transition out costs and any disposal costs.

Extra criteria that support government priorities may be included, such as:

* supporting small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and regional businesses
* providing employment and business opportunities for Indigenous people, veterans, etc.

Pay careful attention to any mandatory criteria. They must be met in order for your submission to be considered.

# Supplier Code of Conduct

The Commonwealth Supplier Code of Conduct outlines the Commonwealth’s minimum expectations of suppliers and their subcontractors while under contract with the Commonwealth. The Code applies to all Commonwealth contracts and places a positive duty on suppliers to take proactive action to prevent and discourage breaches of the Code.

The Code and Code clauses provides structure to both suppliers and Australian Government organisations on how supplier misconduct will be handled.

Where requested by an Australian Government organisation, you may need to clarify in your response how you can/will meet the expectations set out by the Code.

The next module in our workshops looks more closely at the Supplier Code of Conduct. If you are interested in attending a session, contact us at the selling to gov email address, sellingtogov@finance.gov.au and we’ll add you to our contact list.

# Terms and conditions

The draft contract gives you a chance to see the terms and conditions under which your business would be contracted if you are successful. Invest time in understanding the terms of the contract and provisions for effectively managing the contract. You may also wish to seek legal advice about the terms and conditions if you are unsure about anything.

Australian Government organisations must use the [Commonwealth Contract Terms](https://www.finance.gov.au/government/procurement/commonwealth-contracting-suite-ccs) for most contracts up to $200,000. It would be useful to familiarise yourself with these terms.

You may be asked to confirm in your submission whether your business complies with the terms and conditions of the draft contract.

For contracts which are below the $80,000 threshold, there would generally be no need for contract negotiations. It is usually not cost effective to negotiate contract clauses for low value contracts.

For higher value contracts, organisations will ask that you indicate your preparedness to accept the offered contract and to state any clauses that you want to negotiate. You may negotiate terms and conditions in the draft contract. If you don’t raise your concerns as part of your tender submission, it may make things more difficult to negotiate later.

You should be aware that an Australian Government organisation will usually regard an ATM response that departs from the standard terms and conditions as higher risk and a higher cost than one which complies. This may make your response less competitive in terms of achieving value for money.

# Referees

Reference checks are usually made when your business may become a preferred supplier (but not always).

You should select referees for whom you have worked so they can verify the claims you have made in your tender.

Depending on the tender evaluation plan and sequence in which evaluation activities occur, referee checks might be made toward the end of an evaluation process or at the same time as compliance checks.

You should select referees for whom you have performed the same or similar work so they can verify the claims you have made in your submission. For example, if you are applying to be on the Management Advisory Services Panel under a specific service category, provide referees for previous management advisory services specific to that category.

You should always ask your proposed referees if they agree to provide a reference for you before you include them in your response. It is not very helpful to your chances if the referee is not expecting the contact, or worse still, does not wish to give a reference for you.

It is important to note that in checking your business history the Australian Government organisation may talk to any business, or other government organisation, that you have previously supplied, whether you have offered them as a referee or not. This is part of the due diligence process Australian Government buyers must follow.

Ask your referees if they wish to give a reference for you before including them in your response.

#

# Before you lodge

Before you lodge your submission:

* review, edit, and check again. Have multiple people review the submission to look for plain language, spelling and grammar, clear understanding without jargon, simple terms
* check your response is in the requested format with all the required documentation
* plan to submit early to make sure you meet the deadline and have enough time to work through lodgement issues. For a limited tender, responses are lodged via email. Under certain panels, responses will be lodged through the relevant platform. For an open tender, responses are generally lodged via  [AusTender](https://www.tenders.gov.au/).

Australian Government organisations cannot accept your response if it is submitted after the deadline, unless the delay is due solely to mishandling by the Australian Government organisation.

If your submission is late for any other reason, by even a few minutes, it will not be accepted. If the ATM is managed through AusTender, the system will notallow a late tender response.

# Tender writing tips

Consider using a structured methodology when developing your tender response. An example is the STAR method (**S**ituation **T**ask **A**ction **R**esult) which is generally used for recruitment. It can also be used as a guide for including relevant information in your tender submission and help you demonstrate your ability to provide the goods or services required.

For **S**ituation – set the scene and describe the problem to be addressed

For **T**ask – outline what the statement of requirements is asking your business to deliver

For **A**ction – explain the steps that would be taken by your business to deliver and address the situation

For **R**esult – share the outcomes achieved by your actions for similar requirements

By using the STAR method to shape your tender submission, it will be easier to provide a focussed response to the ATM and allow you to detail the steps and approach from your business to reach a positive outcome.

**S**ituation

**T**ask

**A**ction

**R**esult

# When writing your tender response, remember to:

Substantiate your claims

Be truthful and honest

Utilise the maximum word limit

Focus on what your business can do

Explain how your proposal reduces risk

Outline how you provide value for money

Remember to substantiate any claims made in your tender submission and clarify the basis for any assumptions you make, for example phrases like:

* “up to 24 hours” (this could actually only be two minutes)
* “we will save you 38%” (of what, when and how?)
* “we will deliver more, or be better” (more of what, better than what?)
* “we are the only one” (based on what?).

Be truthful and honest in your responses, as everything will be checked.

Do not rely on your businesses’ reputation and assume that government organisations know about your businesses’ capabilities– for example, do not assume that we know who you are and what you can do. The tender evaluation team can only evaluate what has been submitted as part of the tender response, and what is determined from verification activities and due diligence checks (i.e. licence and insurance checks).

Focus on your what your business can do and not the work of other companies. Do not use your tender response to be critical of your competitors, as you will be wasting your word limit, instead of focusing on your businesses’ expertise and experience.

Don’t be afraid to say “no” if necessary – admit what you can do and can’t do at the moment, and what your business can provide in the future. Ignoring a request for quote or direct request is detrimental to your business. Be open and honest about your current capabilities.

Remember to utilise as much of the word limit as possible when preparing your tender response. If you have a significant amount of words left under the limit, you have more than likely not addressed the evaluation criteria with sufficient detail.

Explain in detail how your proposal reduces and manages risk, and presents as the lowest risk option.

Do not forget to outline how your organisation’s proposition will provide the best value for money outcome and lead to continuous improvement for the government organisation.

**Things to avoid:**

Including significant amounts of marketing and promotional material

Being critical of your competitors

Assuming the Government knows and understands your capabilities

# Things to watch out for

Cutting and pasting text from previous tender submissions

Repetition and using broad or vague statements

Including verbose or overly complicated language

Forgetting to contact your referees

Assuming the evaluation process

Be careful if cutting and pasting information from previous tender responses. If you include incorrect information, such as directing the response to a different organisation or referring to an old ATM, your attention to detail will be questioned and negatively impact the tender submission.

Remember that a tender submission is not a sales pitch. Avoid including excessive marketing material and stick to what the procuring organisation has asked for.

Avoid repetition and broad or vague statements in your tender response. If your response is not clear and detailed, it will be difficult to evaluate and may result in your response being excluded.

Also avoid using verbose or overly complicated terminology that is not easily understood by your average reader. If you do need to outline complex concepts or ideas, ensure you provide a simple to understand explanation for a procurement official to evaluate.

Make sure your referees are relevant to the goods or services requested in the ATM. Remember to advise referees that they may be contacted to provide information about their experience working with you.

If you are an SME or Indigenous business, do not assume that you are only evaluated against other similar sized or comparable businesses. Tender evaluations are conducted in an open and transparent manner that involves all tenderers being assessed equally against the evaluation criteria.

Do not assume that evaluations occur in a chronological order, unless this is specified in the ATM. For example, being asked to provide referees does not mean you have been found suitable for all previous stages of the evaluation. Separate evaluation teams may be established to review specific evaluation stages.

Remember to submit your best offer – do not assume that you will get a second opportunity.

# Common pitfalls

Statement of Tax Record

Technology

Clearly describing your business

Value for money

Common pitfalls include:

* Leaving the Statement of Tax Record (STR) to the last minute. If you delay seeking your STR and receive an unsatisfactory STR, you may not have time to obtain a satisfactory STR. Tenderers sometimes supply an STR that does not match the Tendering Organisation. For example, an STR that is for a parent company, subsidiary or other affiliated organisation.
* Not testing your technology and making sure there are no system issues well before the submission deadline.
* Not clearly explaining who you are and what you do, the services or products you provide, what sets you apart from competitors, and how your business can deliver against the specified requirements.
* Not demonstrating value for money. It is very important to understand that Australian Government organisations are looking for value for money, not just the cheapest price.

# Check

Before you lodge your tender response, check:

* you have responded to all the requirements
* have you asked all your questions and received a response, and checked AusTender for any addendum.
* can submit your response using the required method – no tech issues
* has more than one person proofread your submission
* is your response clear, easy to read and understand, and to the point
* have you addressed all mandatory conditions for participation and evaluation criteria
* have you demonstrated value for money
* have you emphasised what sets you apart from your competitors.

# Resources and contacts

The Department of Finance’s Selling to Government website ([sellingtogov.finance.gov.au](https://sellingtogov.finance.gov.au/)) provides information to support businesses to understand how to participate in Australian Government procurement and contracting opportunities.

Information available includes:

* where to find opportunities to sell to the Australian Government
* what rules and processes Australian Government organisations follow when procuring goods and services
* how to respond to an Approach to Market
* what to expect if you are awarded a contract.

The Department of Finance is continuously updating the website to improve information for suppliers.

If you are interested in supplying to the Australian Government, visit [sellingtogov.finance.gov.au](http://sellingtogov.finance.gov.au/) to find out more.

**Visit the** [**AusTender Help and Information Centre**](https://help.tenders.gov.au/)

Don’t forget that AusTender contains a wealth of procurement related information and insights into procurement trends and timing. We encourage you to utilise the information to target organisations and prime contractors and discover upcoming opportunities.

# Feedback

The Department of Finance is interested in feedback on this session’s content. We are committed to providing the most useful resources to businesses wanting to know about supplying to the Australian Government.

If you would like to provide feedback, please submit a short survey response online via the [Workshop Feedback Form](https://sellingtogov.finance.gov.au/feedback/supplier-tender-response).

# Have further questions or want to get in touch?

Please submit all queries via the Selling to Government website’s [Contact Us Form](http://sellingtogov.finance.gov.au/contact-us) or email sellingtogov@finance.gov.au.