

**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS**

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into the DEEWR Tender Process to award employment services contracts

EEWR_SIH_W32

Senator Back provided in writing.

Question

How did the panel determine the past performance of “external” providers?

Answer

All tenderers were required to demonstrate their past performance in delivering services similar to those being tendered through their responses to Selection Criterion 1. Tenderers were required to demonstrate their experience, expertise, achievements and innovation in:

- delivering individualised employment services to a wide range of job seekers that lead to employment outcomes
- assisting highly disadvantaged job seekers to overcome multiple vocational and non-vocational barriers and achieve sustainable outcomes
- assisting job seekers to gain relevant skills, work experience and appropriate training to address skills shortages and local labour market needs, and
- establishing and building community linkages including partnerships or collaborations with local community support organisations

The Request for Tender (RFT) stated clearly that tenderers should provide a comprehensive and complete set of performance information and should not rely on the Department using other sources of information. The RFT also indicated that all tenderers who had not previously delivered employment services on behalf of the Department should supply two referee reports to verify their claims.

The Department checked and verified claims made by tenderers through:

- testing against any relevant information held by department including its extensive databases
- checking through relevant external sources available to the department as appropriate such as
 - other Australian Government departments and agencies,
 - State Government departments and agencies,
 - Local governmentas well as through international contacts.

A comprehensive process for the evaluation was undertaken where tenderers responses and claims were assessed in accordance with approved guidelines and against the published selection criteria. Assessment of a tenderer's response to the published section criteria took into account all the information contained in the entirety of the tender submission (even if the relevant material, claims or examples was contained within a response to a different sub criterion than that being assessed). Evaluation was undertaken on an Employment Service Area (ESA) by ESA basis.

Assessment teams looked across the whole tender response to identify claims and examples to support demonstration by the tenderers of their experience and expertise against the following key factors:

- demonstrated past performance in helping disadvantaged participants;
- a good understanding of the new integrated service provision to achieve outcomes for participants;
- local strategies and collaborative arrangements, including linkages with other service providers at the local, state and national level, which will be used to achieve sustainable outcomes for job seekers with diverse needs; and
- organisational management and governance.

The considerations included assessment of tender responses by teams of two departmental officers and reviews by a senior Account Manager for consistency, and completeness as well as testing any assertions. Assessment and reviews were undertaken by departmental staff with detailed understanding and local knowledge of the ESAs and the capacity and expertise to test and verify claims and validate the appropriateness of local services and strategies and their relevance to the ESA. State Managers also undertook a comparative and consistency check across all the ESAs in their State as well as the providers for whom their State had account management responsibility. The Tender Review Committee (TRC) and delegate also undertook a review and assessment across each ESA, State and nationally.

The tender process was overseen by the independent Probity Adviser, Clayton Utz at all stages, who has been satisfied that the assessment process followed by the Department met all the requirements.