

RESPONSE TO BIDDERS:

APPOINTMENT OF A SERVICE PROVIDER FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT SERVICES ON THE MODERNIZATION OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMME, FOR A PERIOD OF 10 YEARS WITH AN OPTION TO EXTEND FOR A FURTHER PERIOD OF THREE (3) YEARS.

RESPONSE – MODERNISATION OF NATIONAL SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) advertised a tender for the appointment of a service provider for project management services on the modernization of the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), for a period of 10 years with an option to extend for a further period of three (3) years. The tender was advertised in the following media platforms:

- ✓ E-tender portal
- ✓ DBE website

On 22 July 2024 with the initial closing date being 15 August 2024, subsequently extended to 29 August and 5 September 2024 respectively. A non-compulsory briefing session held on 1 August 2024 to provide potential bidders with detailed information about the tender process, requirements, expectations from the bidders, ensure that potential bidders have a clear understanding of the project and promote transparency.

The DBE fulfilled all these requirements to ensure compliance with section 217 of the Constitution which mandates that procurement must be fair, equitable, transparent, competitive and cost effective.

It must be understood that the new model is an intervention that seeks to address all the inefficiencies that are glaring in the current model/s implemented by provincial departments, from late delivery or non-delivery of food items to feed learners, poor quality of food, exorbitant prices, and in certain instances funds are not accounted for or spend for intended purpose. In this process learners who are the sole beneficiaries of

this service are the ones who are seriously affected and disadvantaged hence the decision by the DBE to change the model. The DBE is unapologetic about putting the interest of the learners first as it is our primary mandate and this instance the DBE has a responsibility of providing all learners in public schools quality basic education as entrusted by the Constitution of South Africa.

ADDRESSING THE SPECIFICATION, MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

Accordingly, our clients seek urgent answers to each of the following questions:

What process did the DBE follow in arriving at the list of specifications and mandatory requirements included in the tender bid invitation?

DBE consulted extensively with the Provincial Education Departments as well as with the Minister of Education Council (MEC) to fully understand the weaknesses with the current NSNP (National Schools Nutrition Programme) system and ways in which these deficiencies could be addressed to ensure that ultimately the interests of the learners from a nutrition perspective are fully catered for and balanced with value for money. The consultation sessions resulted in DBE seeking to modernise the NSNP through a tender process holistically covering an end-to-end solution for the NSNP.

Which officials were involved in this process?

Due to legislation protecting the personal information of persons, the names of the officials who were part of the process cannot be disclosed save to say that all due process was adhered to in the appointment of the officials to the Bid Committees.

In terms of which regulations were the warehouse requirements (section 4.4.3 of the tender bid invitation) determined, and on what objective basis are they included as “mandatory requirements”?

Any government entity advertising a tender, must comply fully with all relevant legislation and prescripts. However, the actual service/goods required in the tender document are not informed by legislation rather by the needs of the Department advertising the bid. Therefore, the inclusion of warehousing in the bid specification document is not informed by legislation rather by the needs of the DBE focusing on the provision of an end-to-end solution as part of the modernisation of the NSNP programme.

What practical objectives does the DBE seek to meet with the current list of mandatory requirements?

The National School Nutrition Programme provides meals to approximately 9.7 million learners in 19 000 schools. In terms of fair, equitable, transparent, competitive and cost-effective procurement processes, the Department has considered the size of the NSNP and the minimum requirements to provide quality, on-time, nutritious meals to the learners.

The DBE is aware of numerous inefficiencies in the current system resulting in poor quality, under delivery and / or unreasonable markup on food items and most of all non-delivery that leads to non-feeding which is the ultimate risk that the DBE must mitigate against.

The objective of DBE is to appoint a service provider or a consortium / joint venture of service providers to execute the procurement, warehousing, distribution and management of food items.

Ultimately the successful bidder shall provide project management solutions enabling end-to-end procurement, packaging, storage and distribution of all menu items per school or Early Childhood Development centre.

Does the DBE consider the mandatory requirements critical to the project's success?

Yes

If so, on what basis and how was this conclusion reached.

The mandatory requirements are crucial to a bid of this nature and complexity.

Each of the mandatory requirement plays a significant role in the end-to-end business solution that DBE is seeking to procure. The omission of any of the mandatory requirements which are informed by the various elements of the modernised NSNP will invariably lead to a gap in the provision of an end-to-end solution as envisaged by DBE. Every element of the programme (procurement, warehousing, distribution and management of food items) is a crucial link in the procurement chain to ensure provision of nutritious meals to learners at the most cost-effective prices.

The modernisation of the NSNP will ensure optimisation of economies of scale and improve the quality and delivery of school menus.

The NSNP DBE197 bid is learner centric to ensure optimal nutrition practices in schools whilst mitigating and addressing current deficiencies in the National School Nutrition Programme.

Accordingly, our clients request immediate confirmation that the tender process will be suspended pending an investigation into the specifications and mandatory requirements included in the tender bid invitation.

The DBE is proceeding with the bidding process as it is of the view that due procurement processes were followed to the letter and in compliance with the Constitution. The specification and mandatory requirements are not in any way discriminatory nor seek to favour a certain category of bidders but rather seek to solicit any bidder/s who are qualifying, competent and have adequate resources to deliver successfully on all the requirements of this bid.

The tender process will continue as there has been full compliance with Supply Chain Processes and relevant legislation.