

## Transparency In Public Sector IT Tenders

Transparency is a word with many meanings, interpretations and implications depending on ones point of view. Let's take an example. Assuming that a public sector institution (the Client) requires a certain type of IT services such as application software development, specialist training, IT planning, technical consultancy services ..etc. The natural way to proceed would be to issue a Request For Proposals (RFP). At this stage, it is important to differentiate between internally funded and externally funded projects. While the bidding process for most externally funded projects is transparent by design, internally funded ones leave a lot to be desired. Transparency implies that:

- The Client knows the type of services that are required.
- The Client is serious about awarding a contract and the RFP will not be extended or cancelled without reasonable cause.
- The Client has a reasonable idea of the costs and the necessary budget and funding are available.
- There are no hidden legal or procedural obstacles in proceeding with the issue or subsequent award.
- The RFP is clear, well written, comprehensive and without any contradictory terms and conditions.
- The RFP states eligibility requirements and specifies evaluation criteria.
- The award decision will be taken within a clear timeframe.

Transparency is a pre-requisite to induce service providers to respond favourably to an RFP. It also encourages a service provider to put a maximum time and effort in the preparation of proposals knowing that the evaluation will be fair and equitable. It holds the Client accountable for award decisions and reduces the number of possible objections to any decision taken.

There are many documented cases of opaque (as opposed to transparent) behavior in public sector IT RFPs. Since most public sector tenders require the presentation of some sort of Bid Bond in order to gauge seriousness in responding to RFPs, I wonder if the same public sector Clients would be prepared to issue a "Transparency Bond" equal in value to the Bid Bond in favour of each and every responding bidder in return?

That will be one way to ensure absolute transparency.