



In any procurement exercise applicants are normally required to pre-qualify by being assessed against minimum standards and capability and capacity by quality questions. This can form part of a single stage procurement where only applicants who demonstrate their suitability have their detailed tenders assessed or as the first stage of a two stage procurement process.

Suppliers seeking to demonstrate their suitability for delivering construction projects are required to submit frequent prequalification applications involving many different questionnaire forms. This leads to considerable effort, time and money for those suppliers. For SMEs in particular, the requirement to fill in a myriad of PQQs from different organisations places a large burden upon them and can deter them from bidding for work.

A recent survey carried out by Constructionline revealed that a single PQQ takes a construction supplier an average of 4.5 hours to complete, costing an average of £147 in time that they can be working and earning. As the success rate of bidders is 1 in 10 if a PQQ costs £147 per application **this costs a bidder £1,470** that it needs to recover on every successful Tender. For any typical business, the annual cost could run into thousands of pounds worth of lost money and time.

To address this Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in 2010, as part of their agenda to support SMEs, sponsored the drafting of a publicly available specification, PAS91, a set of standard questions on core criteria essential to prequalification for



construction tendering in association with the British Standards Institution (BSI). A more user friendly revised version was then published in March 2013, named **PAS91:2013**.

PAS91 enables organisations to tailor the document to its particular requirements through the inclusion of optional question modules and the facility to add supplementary or additional project related questions.

The government has recommended the use of PAS91 in the Government Construction Strategy and Common Minimum Standards for construction procurement.

Suppliers who complete PAS91 standard questions can also reuse it for any clients who use PAS91 as their prequalification core criteria.

Contractors need to recover £1,470 on every successful tender to recoup the cost of bidding for work!

The benefits to suppliers include:

- reduced cost of prequalification as Suppliers can reuse previous PAS91 applications;
- an increase in the possibility of participating in additional prequalification processes;
- **freeing up** often scarce resources to invest in potentially more profitable activity.

The benefits to clients using PAS91 include:

- savings in time when compiling and assessing prequalification questionnaires;
- **more supplier certainty** and understanding about basic prequalification requirements and that more suppliers (notably SMEs) can be encouraged to take part, giving wider choice to clients.

YORbuild2, which will replace the industry leading YORbuild Construction Works Framework in 2015, has used PAS91:2013 along with additional tables (using PAS91's "Table 13" numbering system) for the pre-qualification stage. PAS91:2013 itself was used unamended so that contractors with a previously completed PAS91:2013 application could resubmit that along with the additional tables, and allowing those that had not encountered PAS91 before to retain their YORbuild2 PAS91 submission to use in future bids.



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Extensive engagement and consultation was made with the industry ahead of the start of the procurement, including taking part in a series of events in partnership with the **National Federation of Builders** as well as YORhub's own high profile Client and Contractor Consultation event at Leeds Town Hall in June 2014.

Overall YORbuild2 received 120 submissions from a variety of contractors across the construction industry, from global firms down to local micro-SMEs with less than 10 staff. Feedback regarding the PAS91 experience was positive and the procurement pre-qualification stage was a significant improvement in comparison to the previous practice of using bespoke pre-qualification questionnaires.

The assessment of submissions was quicker and required less resources to carry out, with applications being of higher quality and a significant increase in fully compliant applications received. Due to its effectiveness PAS91 is being rolled out as standard within East Riding of Yorkshire Council for construction procurement pre-qualifications.

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