

Workforce Alliance Workforce Technology Systems Framework (RM6387)

Frequently Asked Questions

Nobody is better placed to help you meet the challenges of NHS workforce than the NHS Workforce Alliance. As a team of health workforce experts, we are motivated by a genuine desire to make the NHS better. You can trust us to act in the best interests of the NHS – always putting patient care first.

In this document you will find a list of helpful questions and answers, split into sections for NHS colleagues and suppliers, to help you familiarise yourself with the NHS Workforce Alliance and this specific framework and how it can support you. If by the end of the document you have any queries, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

All Contracting Authorities

Who is the NHS Workforce Alliance?

The NHS Workforce Alliance is a partnership between Crown Commercial Service and the four NHS-owned and operated collaborative procurement hubs:

- NHS Commercial Solutions
- East of England NHS Collaborative Procurement Hub
- NHS London Procurement Partnership
- NHS North of England Commercial Procurement Collaborative

We have been working together since 2019 to combine our experience and expertise for the benefit of the NHS. Crown Commercial Service is an executive agency of the Cabinet Office, and the biggest public procurement organisation in the UK.

Who can use this framework and how can the NHS Workforce Alliance help you?

Any Contracting Authority based within the UK or Crown dependencies can use the framework. The framework is aimed at the NHS, but it can be used by anyone within the public sector (which includes higher education, emergency services, libraries etc.), and the third sector (charities).

We can provide subject matter expert advice and support in making an award under the framework agreement, including use of the award support tool, advice on completing award and procurement documentation. There are circumstances where assisted procurement is available.

Workforce Alliance

We also offer market insight and data to support development of your workforce strategies and can support in engagement with suppliers under management where appropriate.

What is the scope and Lot structure of this framework?

The Workforce Technology Systems Framework agreement provides access to various workforce software services and suppliers that enable organisations to scope out their technology requirements and source them through a fair and compliant route to market.

There are 4 Lots under the framework agreement:

Lot description:

- Lot 1 – Workforce Software
- Lot 2 – Integration, Deployment & Interoperability
- Lot 3 – Professional Services & Consultancy
- Lot 4 – Overlay, User Experience and Single-User Interface

Which suppliers are listed on this framework?

Supplier information can be found on the [NHS Workforce Alliance website](#) and through individual Alliance partner websites.

Is there a rate card and award support tool?

As part of the framework, we are introducing a catalogue which holds suppliers' product information for the Lot that they were awarded. This includes cost of products, licensing models and discounting amounts. The catalogue can be used to conduct desktop evaluations and view which suppliers are available for that product or service.

Is the pricing on the catalogue set or is there an ability to negotiate further?

We would always look to try and improve pricing and to drive greater value for money. The catalogue pricing can be used as part of the award justification if it enables you to identify value for money, but we would recommend competitive processes or seeking to negotiate prices to reflect your needs.

What do I do if my current supplier(s) have not been awarded onto the framework?

Please speak with us. We have procured this framework under the new Open Framework Procedure whereby we will be re-opening the framework every 12 months to enable new suppliers onto the framework. If you share contact details for your incumbent supplier with us then we can work with the supplier, ready for when the framework re-opens. In the interim,

we can support you in finding the most compliant route to market to continue working with your incumbent supplier.

How do I award a Call-Off Contract?

To support organisations utilising this agreement, the below outlines the mechanics for awarding an agreement:

Competitive Selection Process:

- a) Contracting Authorities will have the ability to undertake a Competitive Selection Process. Suppliers awarded to the framework agreement will only be invited to take part in Competitive Selection Processes that relate to the specific Lot/s for which they have been awarded and when, following a shortlisting process utilising the catalogue, their organisation is deemed capable to supply the required product or services.
- b) Competitive Selection Process documentation / templates are included in the Framework Agreement and full support will be provided to Contracting Authorities looking to award a Call-Off under the framework agreement via a Competitive Selection Process. These will include mandatory minimum standards, evaluation processes, service level agreements and key performance indicators.
- c) Contracting Authorities can procure across all Lots in a single competitive process utilising this framework agreement.

Desktop evaluation (mini competition / benchmarking):

- a) The framework agreement will consist of a catalogue with list pricing with a user-friendly matrix and filter system to enable shortlisting of capable suppliers. It enables the quick and efficient benchmarking of solutions to identify value and provide for desktop evaluation.
- b) A separate rate card will be required for each of the four Lots outlined. Any public sector Contracting Authority will have the ability to undertake a direct Call-Off (with any capable supplier) using the catalogue and/or rate card pricing. This pricing may be updated when the framework agreement re-opens as per the process outlined under the Open Framework procedure.

An award without competition (Direct Award) can only be made for services in accordance with Chapter 4, Section 45 of the PA 2023 where it is evidenced that the products, the services, the Contracting Authority or the supplier falls within one or more of the below categories:

- a) where the product or service has a clear and comparable list price, published in the catalogue and available to all potential Contracting

Authorities with details of additional savings through volume, collaborative or group purchasing activities or the purchase of additional products or services. The catalogue will be maintained digitally.

- b) where the products or services have specific capabilities regarding the interoperability of solutions with either:
 - i. in-situ solutions,
 - ii. collective solution procurement (where the dominant solution is being competitively sourced or procured via award without competition as per (i), or
 - iii. where the solution or services provided is for the advancement in the evolution of a products lifecycle or an additional feature to the original solution (for example, a solution purchased to provide job planning has developed a 'Junior Doctor Module' with seamless interoperability which removes the need for a secondary procurement, resulting in an alternative supplier and additional interoperability complications, or where an integration or consultancy partner has experience or capability in the delivery of additional product or features).
- c) where a merger of Contracting Authorities or supplier takes place and multiple solutions are in place, the decision can be made to harmonise solutions whereby the Authority can support an award based on the performance SLAs and KPIs of the incumbent supplier, or where either part (a) or (b) can be satisfied.
- d) where a merger or "buy-out" of supplier takes place, Contracting Authorities can choose to provide an award without competition to the "new" supplier in so much that either (a) or (b) (or both) can be satisfied.

Can the Contracting Authority use their own procurement or tendering portal documents?

Contracting Authorities can utilise their own procurement or tendering portal documents depending on the governance structure internally. But please speak with us regarding the availability of KPI documents, minimum standards, payment incentive mechanisms, risk allocation or any other value-add benefits which could help your process.

What documentation do I need to complete?

Your preferred route to market, will determine the documents that are required. We have provided documents that support each route to market as below:

- Direct Award Justification Form
- Further Competition template
- Call-Off Contract
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Risk Matrix

We would be happy to support in developing your own documentation that maximises your return on investment and value for money.

Is this framework mandatory for organisations to use?

This framework is not mandated; however, it is the **ONLY** framework which has been endorsed for use by NHS England and has also been through rigorous checks by Cabinet Office Spend Controls who expect this framework to be utilised by the NHS. The framework has minimum standards which are relevant to the workforce technology market and has minimum requirements when integrating with central workforce systems. It is also based on NHS Terms and Conditions and is fully supported by the NHS Workforce Alliance to support you through the market engagement, analysis and award phases of any procurement.

Do the interoperability requirements also require suppliers to integrate with future workforce solutions?

All suppliers have signed up to the framework in the full knowledge that they must have in place the required interoperability process to fully integrate with all current and future centralised systems.

Will organisations be penalised for using a supplier who is off framework?

There is no desire or mechanism for penalising any organisation however, we would ask that if you wish to use a supplier that isn't on the framework, you discuss it with us in the first instance to see whether they have applied to be on the framework, are engaged with us in taking part in the re-opening of the framework or are available through a partner on the framework. We want to have as many suppliers directly on the framework as possible so we would always want to hear about suppliers you want to use who are not already on the agreement.

Which goods and services are available through this framework?

Each Lot will have their own requirements and consist of different requirements.

Lot 1 – Workforce Technology Systems

This Lot initially includes:

- Off-the-shelf systems and software (including general and mobile applications **(Apps)**)
- Software / app development
- The development of systems / apps necessary to support their utilisation
- Standardisation of data flows and associated Application Programming Interfaces **(APIs)** relevant to the product

Some example types of workforce software that is available through Lot 1 are:

- e-recruitment, employment checks and onboarding
- occupational health
- case management, including wellbeing
- wage advance
- payroll facilities, including expenses
- learning management systems

What this Lot does **not** include as part of software solutions are:

- The ability to provide individual workforce members (people/staff)
- The role of carrying out occupational health assessments on individuals
- The role of carrying out clinical or medical duties under supervision

Lot 2 – Services for Integration, Deployment and Interoperability

This Lot will initially include:

- System training
- Implementation, transformation and transition services
- Reporting and analytics tools
- Development of interoperability capabilities between systems
- Integration of systems and process

Lot 3 – Professional Services and Consultancy

The framework scope of this Lot will initially include service functions:

- Systems gap analysis
- Specification design
- Change management
- Project management
- Reporting and analytics reporting
- Strategy (workforce strategy, workforce technology strategy, digital strategy, leadership strategy etc.)

- Workforce technology implementation services (e.g. HR, payroll, rostering, time and attendance, LMS and other workforce technology systems)

Lot 4 – Overlay, User Experience and Support

The framework scope of this Lot will initially include service functions:

- Single User Interfacing
- Customisation and standardisation
- System policy design and harmonisation
- Ticketing and support services
- User experience solutions

For further details on what types of goods and services are available, please review the RM6387 WTS Specification.

Did the framework approach existing suppliers to the NHS to invite them to apply onto the framework?

Yes. The NHS Workforce Alliance spent a considerable amount of time understanding which suppliers were being deployed across the NHS specifically and then engaged those suppliers to take part in the tender process. Of course, this doesn't mean that they all applied or if they did, that they were successful. We do have the ability to bring new suppliers on board through the re-opening of the agreement annually. If there is a supplier you want to work with that isn't on the framework, then just let us know.

Suppliers

Can suppliers supply solutions / services under Lots that they have not been awarded to?

No, they can only supply into the Lot that they have been awarded to. If the supplier wishes to supply into other Lots, then there are two options available:

- 1) Submit a bid for the new Lot when the framework re-opens
- 2) Subcontract through an approved supplier

Can suppliers be terminated from the framework?

Suppliers can be terminated through the framework under Clause 17 of the framework agreement. Examples of reasons why suppliers might be terminated from the framework could be performance (KPIs), financial implications, management information delays.

Can suppliers offer discounted rates to Contracting Authorities?

Yes. Contact us to go through the catalogue to discuss options and to initiate discussions with the supplier.

Do suppliers need to provide the NHS Workforce Alliance with any information?

Management Information needs to be submitted by suppliers as per the framework agreement.

Can suppliers add, change or amend their products, services or description of services? If so, how?

Suppliers can update their product or service offering description through the online portal via My: LPP. To add, amend or remove products, they can do this via the catalogue management process. They can contact us for support and guidance.

Can suppliers amend their framework pricing?

Pricing can be amended at any point within the framework duration, following the catalogue management process.

Can suppliers amend terms and conditions?

Suppliers cannot amend the terms and conditions which have been set out in the framework agreement. All queries should have been made during the tender process.