

EQUITAS ACADEMIES TRUST



COMPETITIVE TENDERING POLICY

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Agreed: F & GP Board

Policy Lead: Director of Finance (CFO)

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COMPETITIVE TENDERING

1. AIMS

This policy aims to ensure that:

- The academy trust's funds are used only in accordance with the law, its articles of association, its funding agreement and the Academies Financial Handbook
- The trust's funds are used in a way that commands broad public support
- Value for money (economy, efficiency and effectiveness) is achieved
- Trustees fulfil their duties and responsibilities as charitable trustees and company directors

2. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

- 2.1 The [Academies Financial Handbook](#) states that academy trusts are required to have a competitive tendering policy, and ensure that European Union (EU) procurement thresholds are observed.
- 2.2 This policy is based on the Academies Financial Handbook and [Department for Education \(DfE\) guidance on procurement](#).
- 2.3 This policy also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Academy trustees

Academy trustees will ensure that:

- Spending decisions represent value for money
- The trust's funds are used in a way that commands broad public support
- Relevant professional advice (such as an external auditor) is used, where appropriate
- Goods or services provided by individuals or organisations connected to the trust are provided at no more than cost
- Nobody connected to the trust, directly or indirectly, uses their connection to the trust for personal gain
- Where any trustee has a pecuniary interest in a procurement decision, they exclude themselves from the process and records (e.g. meeting minutes) show that they had no influence on the decision

3.2 Finance & general purposes committee

- 3.2.1 Academy trustees delegate competitive tendering responsibilities to the finance committee.
- 3.2.2 The committee is responsible for reviewing the trust's tendering processes, and for reporting to trustees on tenders.

3.3 Chief financial officer

The Director of Finance is responsible for:

- Ensuring appropriate financial governance and risk management arrangements are in place
- Preparing and monitoring budgets
- Providing information to the finance committee and academy trustees, as appropriate
- Overseeing and supporting competitive tendering

4. **PURCHASE THRESHOLDS**

4.1 De minimis level

4.1.1 Purchase orders do not need to be raised for services or goods with a value up to £1,000. These invoices can be signed off by **department heads**.

4.2 Low to high-value purchase thresholds

Purchase levels are divided into the following:

- Low-value purchase: £1,000 - £9,999
- Medium-value purchase: £10,000 - £49,999
- High-value purchase: over £50,000

4.3 DfE The Public Contracts Regulation 2015

4.3.1 If it is estimated the cost of a contract is above the off regulated threshold for procurement spending the Trust will seek legal advice.

4.3.2 If procurement with a value inclusive of VAT are estimated to be equal or greater than the following:

- Public service contracts awarded central government, £138,760
- Public service contracts awarded sub-central contracting authorities, £213,477
- Public service contracts awarded for social and other specific services, £663,540

5. **FRAMEWORK AGREEMENTS**

5.1 Where possible and appropriate, we will use a framework agreement to contract suppliers.

5.2 These are arrangements that a contracting authority, such as a public sector buying organisation, makes with suppliers. The benefits of frameworks are that they have already been through a competitive tender process and they have favourable terms and conditions. In addition, the framework provider may offer advice and support.

5.3 Depending on the framework we choose, we will either pick the best value supplier from a list or run a mini-competition between listed suppliers. In either case, we will follow the DfE guidance on procurement (see section 2 of this policy) to ensure good practice.

6. TENDERING PROCEDURE: LOW AND MEDIUM-VALUE PURCHASES

6.1 When making low or medium-value purchases without a framework agreement, the trust will use the process outlined below.

- a. **Create a specification** – a specification document will set out what suppliers need to understand what we are looking to buy, including the quality, quantity and delivery date
- b. **Compare suppliers** – a comparison of different suppliers, including their reputation, will help the trust develop a shortlist of at least 3 suppliers we want to approach for a written quote
- c. **Assess quotes** – an award criteria will be developed to assess suppliers' quotes. Criteria may include:
 - How well the supplier meets our specification
 - The whole-life cost of the contract, which may include:
 - The sale price of the goods, works or services
 - VAT
 - Delivery charges
 - Maintenance costs
 - Running costs
 - The cost of removing and disposing of an item or service once we no longer need it
 - Whether there will be price increases or decreases over the life of the contract
 - Value for money

6.2 Each aspect of the criteria will be scored on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest score. A record of how the quotes are evaluated will be kept.

6.3 Director of Finance will evaluate quotes with support from the Headteacher and Accounting Officer.

When we contact suppliers, we will send them:

- The specification
 - Deadlines for quotes and when decisions will be made
 - Instructions for how to ask clarification questions about the specification
- d. Place an order – when the best value quote is identified, we will send the supplier a purchase order, which includes details of the:
- Goods, works or services we are purchasing
 - Price
 - Delivery address
 - Delivery deadline and any other important dates
 - Payment schedule

7. TENDERING PROCEDURE: HIGH-VALUE PURCHASES

7.1 The trust will make high-value purchases without a framework only in rare circumstances and only with legal support. When this does happen, we will use the process below.

- a. Create a specification (see section 6)
- b. Assess the market – we will prepare for the tendering process by developing our knowledge of the market. We will find out how many suppliers are available and the best way to advertise our contract to a range of suppliers
- c. Develop a service level agreement (SLA) – an SLA sets out the standards of service expected from a supplier. Some suppliers may have their own SLAs, which the trust will consider using on a case-by-case basis
- d. Develop a contract – a contract will include terms and conditions, a contract management plan and an exit strategy
- e. Reduce the number of bids – to reduce the number of bids the trust needs to evaluate, we will either use an expression of interest process to gauge interest in the contract or a pre-qualification questionnaire
- f. Establish how we will assess quotes – we will set out criteria that will allow us to evaluate which of the suppliers' bids best meets the requirements in our specification, and is the most economically advantageous tender that best combines cost and quality
- g. Create a timeline for the tender process – this will include the dates of the clarification period, the deadline for submitting tenders and the date we expect to award the contract
- h. Prepare an invitation to tender – this will include:
 - A covering letter with a timeline for the process
 - Instructions on how suppliers can ask clarification questions and submit their tender
 - The specification
 - A pricing schedule
 - Any SLA requirements
 - The contract's terms and conditions
 - Contract management requirements (see 'develop a contract' above)
 - Award criteria, including the scoring system and any weightings
 - If appropriate, an invitation for suppliers to give a practical demonstration of their goods, works or services
- i. Advertise the contract – the contract will be advertised where suppliers are likely to look, such as:
 - The government's Contracts Finder service
 - Local or national newspapers
 - Education publications or websites
 - Trade magazines
- j. Run the tender process and provide clarifications
- k. Evaluate tender responses – at least 2 people will independently score and evaluate each bid, and then compare notes after completing their evaluations; records of decision making and moderation decisions will be kept
- l. Notify suppliers and award the contract
- m. Finalise the contract including post contract negotiation in line with DfE Find a Tender Service (and publish the award, if the contract was advertised in Find a Tender Service)

- n. Abandoning the tender process – on very rare occasions we may need to halt the tender process. Should this occur, we will notify suppliers who are preparing their bids as soon as possible

8. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

- 8.1 The finance & general purposes committee is responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- 8.2 This policy will be reviewed and approved by the board of trustees every 2 years.

9. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

- 9.1 This competitive tendering policy is linked to the following policies:
 - Accounting policies
 - Investment policy

Date of next review: May 2024

Reviewed and approved by:	Date approved:	Next review date:
F&GP Committee	May 2022	May 2024