

TERMS OF REFERENCE

FOR

**FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A SUITABLE SERVICE PROVIDER FOR THE
PROVISION OF MICROSOFT AZURE CLOUD HOSTING AND MAINTENACE FOR
THE QUALITY COUNCIL FOR TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS (QCTO) FOR A
PERIOD OF THIRTY-SIX (36) MONTHS.**

INVITATION TO BID

FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A SUITABLE SERVICE PROVIDER FOR THE PROVISION OF MICROSOFT AZURE CLOUD HOSTING FOR THE QUALITY COUNCIL FOR TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS (QCTO) FOR A PERIOD OF THIRTY-SIX (36) MONTHS.

TENDER NO: QCTO 14-2025/26

Closing Date	Address for Submission
Date: 06 February 2026 Time: 11:00	Quality Council for Trade and Occupations Tender Box @ Reception 256 Glyn Street Hatfield Pretoria 0083

Late Submissions will not be considered

Bidder's Name		
Address		
Contact person		
Contact numbers	(w)	(cell)
Email address		

SITE BRIEFING INFORMATION

Compulsory Virtual Briefing session

Date: 21 January 2026

Time: 11am – 12pm

Briefing Session Link:

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_YjZhZWI3N2UtMTdiYS00NGVkJWI0MjUtMDRkJMjM2ZDY1Zml0%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%221aa8259-7fdc-4376-8b09-18fa797adeed%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22b2cce4c5-0f85-4867-adcb-dec76827efbe%22%7d

Meeting ID: 322 298 291 605 21

Passcode: kA2Hg7Hi

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1. INTRODUCTION

The QCTO is a Schedule 3A Public Entity that was established in accordance with the Skills Development Act, No. 97 of 1998 (as amended), and the National Qualifications Framework Act, No. 67 of 2008 (as amended), and came into operation on 1 April 2010.

The main functions of the QCTO, among others, are to develop standards for occupational qualifications, including trades and skills programmes; accredit skills development providers and assessment centres; conduct assessments; ensure quality assurance; and issue certificates to qualifying learners.

Therefore, the QCTO is responsible for standards generation and maintenance, as well as the quality assurance of occupational full and part qualifications registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) policy, including skills programmes.

The QCTO has approximately 120 staff members and is situated in Hatfield, Pretoria. More information can be obtained from <https://www.qcto.org.za>

Prospective Service Providers who are interested in provision of Microsoft azure cloud hosting for Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) for a period of thirty-six (36) months, and in accordance with the General Conditions of offer, as well as the specifications are requested to complete this tender document, together with all the standard bidding documents in full.

2. BACKGROUND

The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) is a Quality Council established in 2010 in terms of the Skills Development Act, No. 97 of 1998 (as amended) and the National Qualifications Framework Act, No. 67 of 2008 (as amended). Its role is to oversee the design, implementation, assessment and certification of occupational qualifications, including trades, on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF). The QCTO also offers guidance to skills development providers who must be accredited by the QCTO to offer occupational qualifications.

In summary, the QCTO is responsible for:

Establishment and management of the Occupational Qualification Sub-Framework (OQSF):

- Occupational Qualifications and skills programmes development and maintenance.
- Accreditation of Skills Development Providers.
- Accreditation of Assessment Centres.
- Assessment.
- Certification.
- Research and Knowledge Development; and
- Stakeholder Management and Advocacy.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this bid is to appoint a suitable service provider for the provision of Microsoft azure cloud hosting for Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) for a period of thirty-six (36) months, this document intends to provide the prospective service providers with adequate information to understand and respond to QCTO's requirements. It serves to ensure uniformity in responses and to provide a structured framework for the evaluation of proposals. The appointment will be for a period of thirty-six (36) months commencing on the date as prescribed in the Letter of Award and signed Service Level Agreement to be signed by both parties.

4. TENDER SUBMISSION AND COMPLIANCE

Prior to submission, the bidders must check that all pages are properly numbered, and all required documents are signed and initialled. QCTO will hold the duly authorised signatory liable on behalf of the bidder.

Bids received late shall not be considered. The tender (bid) box shall be closed at exactly **11:00 am** of the closing date and bids arriving late will not be considered under any circumstances. Bids received late shall be returned unopened to the bidder. Bidders are therefore strongly advised to ensure that bids be despatched at such a time that will accommodate of any unforeseen events that may delay the delivery of the bid.

NB: Please create an index page for ease of reference. Paginate your bid submission by using numbered file dividers or a similar system. Each page should be initialled with black ink.

BID FORMAT

A detailed Bid in response to this Terms of Reference must be submitted. The Bid should contain all the information required to evaluate the bid against the requirements stipulated in these terms of reference. The following must be attached to the Bid as annexures:

- **Annexure B:** Summary of experience (Must use attached template).
- **Annexure B1:** Pricing information. Price Bids must include VAT and should be fully inclusive to deliver all outputs indicated in the terms of reference (Must use attached Excel template).
- The published terms of reference (this document, including Annexure A to this document).

Bidders must adhere to the below list for submission:

Table 4 (a)

I/We have attached to this document:	Tick if submitted		Office use
• Four hard copies of the technical bid document including the duly completed terms of references document (Initialled by authorised signatories)	Yes	No	
• Annexure B: Summary of experience (Must use attached template).	Yes	No	
• Submission of one pricing completed SBD 3.3 , together with Annexure B1 (Must use attached Excel template). (Separately sealed in an envelope labelled PRICING).	Yes	No	
• One (1) USB Submission of the technical bid document including the duly completed terms of references document (initialled by authorised signatories)	Yes	No	
• Duly Completed Standard Bidding Documents (SBD 1 SBD 4, SBD 6,1)	Yes	No	
• Proof of CSD Registration (National Treasury) MAAA number on the SBD1 (invitation to bid) and attach CSD report. If there will be subcontracting, proof of CSD registration of the sub-contractor must be submitted	Yes	No	
• Proof of company/closed corporation registration and a copy of CM/CK certificates			
• Tax Compliance Requirements	Yes	No	

4.1. Pricing

- 4.1.1. The bidder must submit details regarding the Bid price for the services on the pricing schedule provided in **SBD 3.3**, and Annexure **B 1**. The completed form/s must be submitted together with the **Annexure B1** in 1 envelope.
- 4.1.2. Bidders are required to indicate their rates (costs) inclusive of all applicable taxes.
- 4.1.3. The attached spreadsheet (**B1**) must be used to cost the Bid.
- 4.1.4. The price Bid must include VAT (if applicable) and should be fully inclusive to deliver all outputs indicated in the terms of reference.
- 4.1.5. Bidders must ensure that the Total Bid Price (Including VAT) must be the same on pricing schedule (SBD1) and on the Annexure B1: Costing/Price Schedule. Failure to comply with this requirement will lead to disqualification.
- 4.1.6. Bidders must ensure that the Total Bid Price (Including VAT) must be the same on SBD 3.3 and on the Annexure B1: Costing/Price Schedule. Failure to comply with this requirement will lead to disqualification.
- 4.1.7. Bidders must ensure that they indicate the Bid Prices (Including VAT) for each year on the Annexure B1: Costing/Price Schedule
- 4.1.8. All other cost increases will be negotiated, not exceeding the actual inflation rate (CPI).
- 4.1.9. QCTO will not provide upfront payments.

NB: Failure to provide the pricing bid and errors on calculations will invalidate the bid and result in immediate disqualification of the bid

4.2. PARTNERSHIPS AND LEGAL ENTITIES

In the case of the bidder being in a partnership, close corporation or a company, a certificate reflecting the names, identity numbers and addresses of the partners, members or directors (as the case may be) must be submitted with the Bid.

4.3. CONSORTIUMS AND JOINT VENTURES

- 4.3.1. If the bidding unit emanates from a joint venture or collaborative partnership or consortium (including a newly formed company), the individual entities that make up the bidding unit should each provide all the mandatory requirements.
- 4.3.2. Should all the requirements in respect of the bidding unit or the individual entities not be met, the bidding unit will be disqualified.
- 4.3.3. It is recognised that bidders may wish to form consortia to provide the services.
- 4.3.4. In response to this invitation to bid, a consortium shall comply with the following requirements:
 - A copy of the agreement entered by the consortium members shall be submitted with the Bid. It shall be signed to be legally binding on all consortium members.
 - The Bid document shall be signed to be legally binding on all consortium members.
 - One of the members shall be nominated by the others as authorized to the lead member and this authorisation shall be included in the agreement entered between the consortium members.
 - The lead member shall be the only authorised party to make legal statements, communicate with QCTO and receive instructions for and on behalf of any or all the members of the consortium.

5. SCOPE AND DEFINITION OF WORK

Specification for the appointment of a Cloud Service Provider who will be responsible for provisioning of cloud platforms services and their associated licences with the following specifications to ensure compatibility with QCTO's IT environment as follows:

01	Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity	Automate the recovery of services when outage occurs. Bring over applications in an orchestrated manner to help restore services quickly.
02	Environment Configuration	System build and commissioning.
03	Automation	A cloud-based automation and configuration service that provides consistent management across cloud platform. Must have following capabilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Orchestrate processes ✓ Collect inventory ✓ Track changes ✓ Assess Compliance ✓ Schedule update installation ✓ Role based access control
04	Traffic Management	Capability to control the distribution of traffic across application endpoints, continuous monitoring of endpoint health and automatic failover when endpoints fail.
05	Data Management	SQL Database, Data Storage, Import/Export capabilities and File Services. Must support Microsoft SQL 2012 and higher.
06	Identity Management	Capability to run Windows Active Directory to tie local network and cloud network together.
07	IP Requirement	Provide Public IP resources to communicate with other cloud resources, on -premises network and the internet.
08	Security	Inclusion of unified security management platform that includes the following features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Anti-malware and network security configuration ✓ Hardening of public facing environments ✓ Security health monitoring for both cloud workloads ✓ Security threat blocking through access and app controls ✓ Security vulnerability and discovery tools

		and patches ✓ Advances threat detection through security ✓ Adjustable security policies for maintaining regulatory and standards compliance.
09	Backup Capability	Must include automated daily backups and database replication and redundancy capabilities.
10	Scalable Resources	Provide the capability to increase/decrease resources, as needed, to support any periods of unpredictable high/low usage. Scalable resources include but not limited to: - ✓ Bandwidth ✓ Servers ✓ Storage ✓ Database Instances
11	Software Licenses requirements	Provider would be responsible for licensing, including but not limited to Operating Systems, servers and applications. I.E MS SQL 2019
12	Vendor Support	Managed Support Services

Current Azure Resource Inventory

Server	Processor	Storage	
Host 1	AMD EPYC 7763 64-Core Processor 2.44 GHz	32GB	650GB
Host 2	Intel(R) Xeon(R) Platinum 8370C CPU @ 2.80GHz	32GB	650GB
Host 3	Intel Xeon CPU E5-2673 v4 @ 2.30GHz	8GB	2TB
Host 4	Intel Xeon Silver 4210 CPU @ 2.20GHz 2.19GHz	8GB	300GB
Host 5	Intel(R) Xeon(R) Platinum 8370C CPU @ 2.80GHz	32GB	C: 2.2TB
Host 6	Intel(R) Xeon(R) Platinum 8370C CPU @ 2.80GHz	8GB	C: 400GB

6. PROJECT TIMELINES

The service provider must ensure that the project is completed within thirty-six (36) months after SLA (Service Level Agreement) is signed. Although the total duration shall be thirty-six (36) months, the QCTO shall review the bidder's performance at the end of every six (06) months and reserves the right to terminate the contract due to non-performance.

7. DELIVERABLES AND TIME FRAMES

The service provider shall adhere to the schedule that outlines the project's timeline below:

DELIVERABLES	TIMEFRAME
Inception Meeting Signing of the SLA	March 2026

8. COMPANY REQUIREMENTS

8.1. The following must be submitted:

- 8.1.1. Certified copies of Identity Documents (IDs) and or valid passport for non-South African citizen of company directors
- 8.1.2. Proof of company/closed corporation registration and a copy of CM/CK certificates
- 8.1.3. CSD Registration (National Treasury)
- 8.1.4. Microsoft Partner Certification

9. EXPERIENCE / SKILLS / PAST PERFORMANCE / TEAM REQUIRED

Bidders will demonstrate adequate experience through the number, types, scope and geographical spread of projects/assignments undertaken. The attached spreadsheet **Annexure B** must be used to summarise qualifications, skills and experience. The past performance of bidders in executing similar projects will be evaluated using the references supplied by bidders as well as any other information available to the BEC panel.

9.1. Company Experience

The service provider (bidding company) must have a minimum of five (05) years of operational experience in designing, implementing, and managing Microsoft Azure solutions. To support this, service providers are required to submit CVs of proposed team members, contactable references for 5 or more recent projects. Reference letter/s (on the letterhead of the company and signed) as proof that they have successfully rendered the services, or that they have been providing similar services for at least five (05) years. The reference letter/s should include contactable details for verification purposes. The attached template (**Annexure B**) must be used to summarise the experience.

9.2. Team Qualifications and Experience Required

Team members indicated in the proposal must be available for the duration of the project and must play a meaningful role in the project. Replacement of team members may only be done in consultation with QCTO and replacement of such must have the same qualifications / experience as those they are replacing.

The following table illustrates the minimum qualification and experience required for.

Table 9.2(a)

NO	Roles*	Qualifications	Experience
1	Project manager	CompTIA Project+, PRINCE2 or PMP	Five or more years of experience in Project management
2	Technical Lead/ Specialist	Microsoft Certified: Azure Solutions Architect Expert Microsoft Certified: Azure Developer Associate Microsoft Certified: DevOps Engineer Expert	Five or more years of experience in designing, implementing, and managing Microsoft Azure solutions

**Please note that one individual can fulfil up to two roles;*

9.2.1. Confirmation of experience, qualification and availability

The following must be submitted for each of the proposed team members/ roles:

- Detailed CV indicating qualifications, experience as well as contactable references. (attached template must be used for CVs)
- Attach certified copies of all qualifications.

QCTO reserves the right to verify all qualifications through the South African Qualifications Authority and to verify experience indicated on CVs with third parties.

10. EVALUATION

QCTO may request additional information, clarification, or verification regarding any information contained in a bid. Information will be requested in writing, and the bidder must provide the requested information within forty-eight (48) hours after the request has been made; otherwise, the bidder will be disqualified.

QCTO may conduct due diligence on any bidder, which may include interviewing customer references or other activities to verify a bidder's other information and capabilities (Including visiting the bidder's previous premises and/or sites to verify certain stated information or assumptions). In these instances, the bidders will be obliged to provide QCTO with all necessary access, assistance, and/or information that QCTO may reasonably request and to respond within the given time frame set by QCTO.

The 80/20 principle will be applied in terms of the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act.

10.1. STAGE 1: MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

During this stage, the bid will be reviewed to determine compliance with all mandatory requirements and such documents must be signed by a duly authorised representative. Failure to meet or submit any or all the above mandatory requirements will lead to the bidder being disqualified.

Table 10.1(a):

I/We have attached to this document:	Tick if submitted		Office use
	Yes	No	
• Microsoft Partner Certification	Yes	No	
• Certified copies of the identity documents of those with equity/shares	Yes	No	
• CSD Registration (National Treasury)	Yes	No	
• Proof of company/closed corporation registration and a copy of CM/CK certificates	Yes	No	

10.2. PHASE 1: FUNCTIONALITY

Only bidders that qualified during the Mandatory Evaluation will be evaluated on functionality. At this stage, the evaluation process will be based on the bidder's responses in respect of their Bids against Terms of Reference and quality.

Table 10.2(a): Qualifying Bid will be evaluated on the following:

No	Evaluation Criteria	Guideline	Scoring	Points
1	Company Experience	<p>Dated and signed (on client company's letterhead) Completion/reference letters with recommendations demonstrating experience in managing Microsoft Azure solutions (Number of similar projects completed), in public or private sectors, in the last five (05) years.</p> <p>Signed and dated reports (on the bidder's letterhead) for each reference letter stating the client's business problem(s) and the software solutions provided.</p> <p>Reference letters must contain the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed and on an entity letterhead. • Clearly indicate the type of service provided. • Recommendation or comment on service rendered • Contract duration. • Relevant contact person's name, Surname, position and contact number/s <p>QCTO reserves the right to contact these organisations, without prior notice to the bidder</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 or more projects = 40 • 4 projects = 30 • 3 projects = 20 • 2 projects = 10 • 1 project = 5 • 0 projects = 0 	40
2	Qualifications and Experience: Project manager	CompTIA Project+, PRINCE2 or PMP	<p>Relevant qualification and 5 or more years' experience = 10 points</p> <p>Relevant qualification and 3–4 years' experience = 5 points</p> <p>Relevant qualification and less than 3 years' experience = 0 points</p>	10
3	Qualifications and Experience: Infrastructure Technical Lead/ Specialist	<p>Microsoft Certified: Azure Solutions Architect Expert</p> <p>Microsoft Certified: Azure Developer Associate</p> <p>Microsoft Certified: DevOps Engineer Expert</p>	<p>Relevant qualification and 5 or more years' experience = 30 points</p> <p>Relevant qualification and 3–4 years' experience = 20 points</p> <p>Relevant qualification only = 10 points</p>	30

No	Evaluation Criteria	Guideline	Scoring	Points
4	Microsoft Partner letter	An official Microsoft document indicating the partner status	Cloud Solution Provider and Solutions Partner for two or more solution areas = 20 points . Cloud Solution Provider and Solutions Partner for one solution areas = 15 points Cloud Solution Provider = 10 points	20
	Total			100

Each criterion shall be assessed and scored on the evaluation sheet using the above points.

Threshold: Bidders who score less than **80** out of **100** points will not be considered for Price and Specific Goals and will be disqualified for this project

10.3. STAGE 2: PRICE AND SPECIFIC GOALS

Only bids that achieved the minimum qualifying score/percentage for functionality will be considered further in terms of the 80/20 preference point system.

The formulae to be utilised in calculating points scored for the preference point system will be included in the tender document.

Step 1 will be the calculation of points for price where the lowest bid will score 80 points for price, while bids with higher prices will score lower points for price on a pro-rata basis. The following formula will be utilised to calculate the points for price in respect of Bid with a Rand value below R50 000 000 (all applicable taxes included):

$$Ps=80(1-Pt-PminPmin)$$

Where:

Ps = Points scored for comparative price of Bid or offer under consideration.

Pt = Comparative price of Bid or offer under consideration; and

Pmin = Comparative price of lowest acceptable Bid or offer.

Step 2 will be the calculation of points for the Specific goals contribution where **20** points will be awarded to a Bidder as per the table below:

Specific goals	Definitions	Number of Points
Women ownership with at least 50%. >50% = 5 points <50% = 0 point	5 points can be claimed by bidders who have owners/directors who are Black women with at least 50% of ownership	5
Youth ownership with at least 50%. >50% = 5 points <50% = 0 point	5 points can be claimed by bidders who have owners/directors who are Black persons from the age of 16 to 35 with at least 50% of ownership	5
Black ownership with at least 50%. >50% = 10 points <50% = 0 point	10 points can be claimed by bidders who have owners/directors who are Black with at least 50% of ownership	10

Note: Failure to provide certification or affidavit substantiating the attainment of any of the Specific goals criteria will result in the Bidder being awarded zero (0) points for the Specific goal.

In the case that B-BBEE certificates are used to substantiate the points, the bidder must submit the full verification report, which shows the percentage of black ownership, Women, Youth and address for locality (see SBD 6.1 page 4 for verification documents).

11. CALCULATING THE FINAL SCORE

The points scored for the price (step 1) will be added to the points scored for the Specific goals (step 2) to obtain the tenderer's total points scored out of 100.

AREAS OF EVALUATION	POINTS
Price	80
Specific Goals	20
Total	100

12. SPECIAL CONDITIONS APPLICABLE TO THIS BID

- **Data Ownership:** - QCTO will retain full control and ownership over their data, with Cloud Service Provider identity and access controls available to restrict access to customer infrastructure and data.
- **Ownership:** - Service Level Contracts shall state that any data migrated to the cloud remains the property of QCTO, regardless of who manages or operates the cloud. QCTO will retain rights of data access, retrieval, modification and deletion regardless of the physical location of the cloud services, including the right to approve, deny and revoke access by third parties.
- **Access:** - Access, retrieval, modifications and deletion of data shall remain the right of the QCTO.
- **Interoperability:** - The cloud service provider shall allow the QCTO to move data on and off the cloud platforms as needed.
- **Data Sovereignty:** The Cloud Service Provider shall ensure that all data belonging to QCTO is subject to the laws and regulations of the republic of South Africa.
- QCTO will become the owner of all information, documents, programmes, advice and reports generated and compiled by the Service Provider in the execution of the services.
- The copyright of all documents and reports compiled by the Service Provider will vest in QCTO and may not be reproduced or distributed or made available in any other way without the written consent of QCTO.
- All information, documents, programmes and reports must be regarded as confidential and may not be made available to any unauthorized person or institution without the written consent of QCTO.
- Appointment is subject to both parties agreeing with the Service Level Agreement; both parties must sign the agreement.
- The successful bidder shall provide the service required based on the set timelines agreed with QCTO.
- Conditions stipulated in the general conditions of the contract will be applicable should any of the parties fail to deliver (read together with the Service Level Agreement signed by both parties).
- On termination of the agreement, for whatever reason (s), all documents, programmes, reports, must be handed to QCTO, The Service Provider relinquishes the right of retention thereof.
- Financial penalties will be issued as determined in the Service Level Agreement for late delivery of work packages not due to QCTO delays.
- The contract shall be for a maximum of 24 months.
- Payment of Invoices shall be subject to satisfactory performance based on the pre-agreed criteria as per the SLA.
- The only exclusions to penalties shall be conditions the QCTO accepts to be beyond the service provider's control.

13. GENERAL CONDITIONS OF CONTRACT

The General Conditions of Contract (GCC) must be accepted. QCTO reserves the right to implement remedies as provided for in the GCC.

The GCC can be downloaded from the Treasury Website. Please refer to the link below:

<http://www.treasury.gov.za/divisions/ocpo/sc/GeneralConditions/General%20Conditions%20Contract.pdf>

14. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

The successful bidders will be expected to enter into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the QCTO. The contract shall be for a maximum duration of 24 months subject to an annual appraisal and confirmation of compliance with the bid requirements.

The SLA will include, amongst others, the following:

- i Period of agreement.
- ii Pricing Conditions.
- iii Changes to the proposed team.
- iv Method of communication and reporting.
- v Non-performance.
- vi financial penalties and termination of the contract.
- vii Procedures relating to payments.
- viii Procedures relating to management reports.
- ix Terms of deliverables
- x Reviews.
- xi Uncompleted work.
- xii Confidentiality; and
- xiii Disputes.

The QCTO has a standard template for Service Level Agreements into which both parties (QCTO and the successful bidder) will provide inputs. This SLA shall be the sole document governing the business relationship between the QCTO and the successful bidder. No additional agreements may supersede or govern the SLA.

15. ACCEPTANCE OF BID

QCTO does not bind itself to accept either the lowest or any other tender and reserves the right to accept the tender that it deems to be in the best interest of the organization. QCTO reserves the right to accept the offer in full or in part

16. TENDER VALIDITY PERIOD

The validity period for this bid is **180 days**.

17. ENQUIRIES

Any technical enquiries regarding the terms of reference shall be directed in writing to:

Mr. Hangwelani Tshifaro

Email: Tshifaro.H@qcto.org.za

Contact persons for SCM and administrative related issues:

Mr. Lekhotla Motloung

Email: tenders@qcto.org.za