



international relations & cooperation

Department:
International Relations and Cooperation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NON-COMPULSORY BRIEFING SESSION: PANEL FOR CATERING SERVICES (DATABASE)

Questions and Answers Session.

Following each presentation, the Chair opened the floor for questions strictly related to the scope of work and, subsequently, the evaluation methodology. Mr. Rakhoale managed the queue of raised hands and facilitated responses from Mr. Malumise and Ms. Mazibuko. A summary of the key questions raised by service providers and the department's responses is set out below.

Question 1: Who bears the cost of the vetting process for personnel deployed to DIRCO events?

Response: The vetting process is coordinated by DIRCO's in-house Accreditation work stream and executed by the State Security Agency. There is no cost to the service provider; the department, including the cost of accreditation cards or wristbands, covers the entire process.

Question 2: Can service providers be given a calendar of DIRCO's annual events to gauge expected volumes?

Response: DIRCO does not maintain a fixed annual calendar of events, as most requirements arise from standing meetings and ad hoc functions. Major events, such as the SADC Summit or state visits, are scheduled with limited notice, and service providers should expect to be called upon on short turnaround times.

Question 3: Can an Excel version of the bill of quantities be provided instead of the PDF with pre-populated zeros?

Response: An Excel version of the bill of quantities has already been uploaded to the departmental website and the eTender portal. The workbook is formatted so that quantity fields are locked, while pricing fields (shaded grey) can be completed by the bidder, with totals calculating automatically once prices are entered.

Question 4: Does the scope of work cover catering only, or catering and decor, given that equipment hire is also required?

Response: The department requires a Ten-key solution. While some smaller events may only require refreshments using existing on-site facilities, larger events require the service provider to supply catering equipment, décor items such as table linen and flowers, and the associated staff.

Kgoro ya Tirisano le Tshomišano ya Dinaga tša Boditšhabatšhaba • Lefapha la Dikamano le Tshebedisano Dinaheng tsa Matjhaba • Lefapha la Dikamano tsa Boditšhabatšhaba le Tirisano • UMnyango Wezobudlelwano Nokubambisana Bamazwe Namazwe • Litiko Letebudlelwane Bemave kanye Nekusebenti-sana • ISebe lezobudlelwane neNtsebenziswano yamZwe ngamaZwe • UmNyango weTjhebiswano nokuSebenzisana kweenTjhabatjhaba • Muhasho wa Vhushaka ha Dzitshakatshaka na Tshumisano • Ndzawulo ya Vuxaka bya Matiko ya Misava na Ntirhisano • Departement van Internasionale Betrekkings en Samewerking

Question 5: Given the short turnaround times mentioned (as little as twenty-four hours), what are DIRCO's operating hours for setup, including décor and catering on the same day as an event?

Response: DIRCO's guesthouse team operates on an on-call basis and is available outside standard hours where required. Service providers appointed at short notice would be expected to be ready on site at the time agreed with the department, which may include early morning or late arrangements depending on the event.

Question 6: If a joint venture is required for the halal certificate arrangement, does this change the administrative documentation required, compared to simply submitting a certificate and letter of intent?

Response: The department clarified that the terms of reference do not require a joint venture; the reference to a joint venture had been used only as an illustrative example. Where a service provider relies on a third party's halal or municipal certification, only a signed written agreement between the two parties confirming the arrangement is required, not full joint-venture documentation.

Question 7: If a company profile demonstrates experience but lacks photographic evidence, will this be considered sufficient?

Response: Photographic evidence is a stated requirement of the tender. Service providers whose profiles do not yet include images should update their documentation before submission, as the department must apply the requirements consistently and fairly to all bidders.

Question 8: Who covers the cost of preparing a presentation, food tasting and mock setup during the technical evaluation phase?

Response: The cost of preparing for and participating in the technical evaluation, including the presentation and mock setup, is for the account of the service provider. This is treated as a standard cost of participating in the tender process, and bidders unable to bear this cost are not obliged to proceed to that stage.

Question 9: What guarantee do panel members have of receiving work, and how will requests for quotation be allocated among panel members?

Response: Being appointed to the panel does not guarantee future work. The panel forms a pre-approved database from which the department will invite groups of companies to submit quotations for specific events as they arise, with the successful bidder for each event determined competitively rather than through a fixed rotation.

Question 10: How can service providers access the bid documents, and are they available online?

Response: The bid documents, including the bill of quantities in both PDF and Excel format, have been uploaded to the departmental website and the eTender portal, from which service providers can download the full set of documents.

Question 11: Should companies use the department's optional reference letter template, or can existing reference letters from clients be used?

Response: The department's reference letter template is optional and provided purely as a guide. Service providers may use their own existing reference letters, provided each letter includes a company letterhead, a description of the services rendered, an indication of client satisfaction, the referee's contact details and the duration of the contract, failing which the letter will not be considered valid.

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Question 12: Many existing reference letters do not state the monetary value of past contracts. Is this a problem, and can supporting documents such as quotations or purchase orders be submitted instead?

Response: The department confirmed that a stated contract value is not a requirement for a reference letter to be valid; what matters is that the letter demonstrates the calibre and duration of the service rendered. Service providers were encouraged to approach past clients ahead of the closing date to obtain compliant letters and, going forward, to request reference letters immediately after completing each contract.

Question 13: Are subcontracting or third-party agreements for halal and kosher certification required to be submitted with the bid, or only later in the process?

Response: Where a service provider relies on a third party for halal or kosher certification, the signed written agreement confirming this arrangement must be submitted together with the halal or kosher certificate as part of the bid documentation.

Question 14: If a reference letter does not state the value of a past contract, can a purchase order be attached to demonstrate the value of that contract?

Response: Service providers were advised to first review the requirements set out for a valid reference letter, as value is not itself a mandatory field. Supporting documents may be used to strengthen a proposal, but the letter itself must still meet the stated letterhead, description, satisfaction, contact and duration requirements.

Question 15: How many companies is the department looking to appoint to the panel?

Response: The final number of companies to be appointed to the panel has not yet been determined and will depend on how many bidders successfully pass the administrative compliance, technical evaluation and price and preference stages of the process.

Question 16: Will the department consider the scale of work a service provider can handle when allocating opportunities, to support the growth of small businesses, and is silver required for chafing dishes as well as cutlery?

Response: The Chairperson acknowledged the importance of supporting small business growth and noted that the evaluation deliberately places weight on technical expertise and site demonstration rather than pricing alone at the presentation stage, to give smaller companies a fair opportunity to showcase capability. Mr. Malumise confirmed that both cutlery and chafing dishes must be silver in finish; gold is not accepted for either item.

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