



Question

RE: REQUEST FOR QUOTATION FOR THE PROVISION OF MAINTENANCE OF 35 TRAVELATORS (PASSENGER CONVEYORS) FOR A PERIOD OF EIGHT (8) MONTHS AT OR TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (RFQ 74417 RE-ISSUE)

We refer to the above-mentioned Request for Quotation (RFQ) currently published by the Airports Company South Africa (ACSA).

Upon reviewing the tender documentation, specifically the Functionality/Evaluation Criteria pertaining to **Company Experience**, we note that bidders are strictly required to demonstrate prior experience associated exclusively with "Travelators only." We wish to formally raise a serious concern regarding this specific requirement, as it inherently restricts fair competition and breaches prevailing South African procurement frameworks.

1. Technical Materiality and Similarities

Travelators (passenger conveyors) belong to the exact same asset class and technical family of "people movers" as escalators. From a mechanical, electrical, and structural engineering perspective, the two technologies share immense similarities, including:

- **Drive Systems:** Both rely on identical motor, gearbox, and drive chain configurations to facilitate continuous movement.
- **Safety Mechanisms:** They utilize the same electronic safety switches, emergency stop circuits, comb-plate sensors, and skirt-deflector devices.
- **Control Infrastructure:** The Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs) and variable frequency drives governing operational speed and monitoring are fundamentally equivalent.

Given these deep technical overlaps, a competent contractor with extensive experience in escalator maintenance possesses the requisite technical capability to maintain travelators safely and efficiently.

2. Anti-Competitive Nature and Local Monopoly

In South Africa, large-scale travelator infrastructure is highly concentrated and almost exclusively found within major airport terminals—most notably at O.R. Tambo International Airport (ORTIA). By explicitly restricting acceptable experience to "travelators only," ACSA inadvertently creates an artificial barrier to entry.

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Airports Company South Africa SOC Ltd Reg No 1993/004149/30 VAT no 4930138393 Board of Directors: Mr Irvin Phenyane (Chairperson), Dr Kgabo Badimo, Ms Dudu Hlatshwayo, Mr Andile Khumalo, Ms Lwazikazi Nopece, Mr Theunis Chamberlain, Mr Roy Mnisi, Mr Surendra Sooklal, Ms Xoliswa Daku, Ms Keitumetse Mahlangu, Ms Mpumi Mpofu (Chief Executive Officer), Mr Luzuko Mbotya (Chief Financial Officer), Ms Fefekazi Sefara (Company Secretary)



This restrictive criterion effectively narrows the pool of qualifying bidders down to those who have previously held this exact contract at ORTIA. Such a provision gives an unfair advantage to incumbent service providers, effectively creating a monopoly and shutting out otherwise highly capable, qualified, and empowered transformation-focused entities.

3. Legislative Non-Compliance

We submit that the current stricture violates both the letter and spirit of South African public procurement and competition laws:

- **Section 217 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:** This section mandates that when an organ of state contracts for goods or services, it must do so in accordance with a system which is **fair, equitable, transparent, competitive, and cost-effective**. Restricting experience to an asset found almost exclusively at your own facility directly defeats the principle of competitiveness.
- **The Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act (PPPFA):** Evaluation criteria must be objective, reasonable, and proportionate to the scope of work without being designed to intentionally exclude capable bidders.
- **The Competition Act No. 89 of 1998:** The criteria, as currently phrased, constitute an exclusionary act that substantially prevents or lessens competition in a market, which is a matter of strict concern to the Competition Commission of South Africa.

Conclusion and Way Forward

In light of the above, we respectfully request that ACSA Procurement reviews and amends the evaluation criteria under Company Experience to allow for **"Experience in the maintenance of Travelators and/or Escalators (People Movers)."** This simple adjustment will ensure the procurement process remains open, fair, unbiased, and compliant with national legislation, while still safeguarding ACSA's technical requirements.

Please note that we raise this in the spirit of constructive engagement. However, should ACSA show no willingness to consider this reasonable request to remedy the criteria, we reserve our rights to escalate this matter to the Competition Commission of South Africa, the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer (OCPO), and any other appropriate legal forum for urgent intervention.

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Response

I do not agree with the email suggestion stipulated below. While there are certain technical similarities in people movers, travelators incorporate distinct mechanical components—such as drums and continuous belt systems—that differ significantly from escalator step-chain mechanisms. These differences require specialised expertise, and experience in escalator maintenance alone does not necessarily ensure the capability to maintain travelators safely and efficiently. Furthermore, our travelators are very old, and many of the mechanical and electrical components are no longer available on the market. This situation demands strong supplier networks and extensive experience with the existing infrastructure to ensure effective maintenance and reliable operation.

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