

Tendering guide

A guide for tendering with the NT Government

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Introduction

Successful tendering or quoting for Government business can be an important part of your business model.

The Northern Territory (NT) Government has produced this guide to help you tender for business with us. It focuses on developing tenders or larger quotes and includes information to help you develop a professional tender response or quote.

Although each Government agency is generally responsible for its own purchasing (procurement), they all have to follow specific processes and this guide will help you compete for business with all NT Government agencies, except the 3 Government Owned Corporations.

The Territory has three Government Owned Corporations:

- Power and Water Corporation
- Jacana Energy, and
- Territory Generation

Procurements undertaken by the above entities are undertaken in accordance with their own procurement frameworks, and are therefore outside the scope of this document.

A glossary at the end of this guide explains what certain terms used by the NT Government mean.

For more information

This document is intended as a guide to support you when engaging with the NT Government's tendering process. Each tender document will refer to conditions of tendering or conditions of quoting, and to conditions of contract. It is important you are familiar with the ones relevant to the project you are submitting an offer for as these conditions are different. Works conditions require different plans to be lodged and they may require project control or a bank guarantee. Supply conditions may require information about delivery by barge or free in store pricing.

For more detailed information about how to do business with the NT Government, go to the [Northern Territory Government website](https://nt.gov.au/industry)¹.

This website will lead you to our Procurement page and Quotation and Tenders Online.

¹ <https://nt.gov.au/industry>

Part 1: Before you start

Why do I have to formally tender for NT Government business?

Procurement principles

When the NT Government purchases goods, works, services or consultancies, it is spending public money. For this reason it is vital that all suppliers are chosen fairly using a transparent, consistent, and equitable process.

Government agencies must follow procurement procedures that are guided by procurement principles along with other policies, rules and guidelines (including the [Buy Local Plan](#)²) which are applied according to the value and type of the business.

Procurement methods

The value of NT Government projects can range from small to very large. The value and complexity of the purchase will determine the procurement method used, as outlined below.

Estimated procurement value	Procurement process you may be involved in
Up to \$100,000 (including GST)	Quotation process Select quotation process Direct purchasing Direct contracting
Over \$100,000 (including GST)	Public tender Select tender Direct contracting

How do I access NT Government tender and quotation opportunities?

Register on the NT Government Quotations and Tenders Online (QTOL) website

By registering on the NT Government [Quotation and Tenders website](#)³ and identifying the types of opportunities you are interested in. You will be alerted by email when a relevant tender opens.

When you register, you will choose a username and password. Make sure you record your registration details as these will allow you to have ongoing access to the site.

Register with Industry Capability Network NT

The Industry Capability Network NT (ICN NT) is an independent business network that operates across Australia and New Zealand. They are part of a national network that support businesses and assists the NT

² <https://nt.gov.au/industry/government/sell-my-goods-and-services-to-government/buy-local-plan>

³ <https://tendersonline.nt.gov.au/Tender/List/#!/Current>

Government with matching us with businesses that can potentially meet our requirements. This includes finding local suppliers with the right capabilities. Registration is free of charge.

Visit [ICN NT website](#)⁴ for more information.

Register with NT Indigenous Business Network

If you are an Indigenous business, you can register with the NT Indigenous Business Network (NT IBN). They are the peak body representing NT Indigenous Businesses. The NT IBN can assist you in a range of areas, including organisational development, business support and collaborative opportunities. When we are looking for an Indigenous business to work with, agencies will engage with NT IBN for assistance.

Visit [NT IBN website](#)⁵ for more information

Register with Contractor Accreditation Limited

If you are a contractor working in the infrastructure, civil, or trades and related services space, you may need to hold Contractor Accreditation Limited (CAL) accreditation. The NT Government use CAL to pre-qualify contractors and sub-contractors that are seeking to tender above the value of \$100,000 in the Territory. Your tender documents will outline what (if any) industry accreditation is required. Make sure your business holds the correct level of accreditation in the requested category and group, before submitting your tender. Without this your tender may be deemed inadmissible for consideration.

It is a good idea to start the registration process with CAL early as the initial process can take a while. They will ask you for business information and assess your financial and technical capability before providing you with accreditation.

To find out if you need to register, visit [CAL website](#)⁶.

Let agencies know you are out there

Making agency buyers aware of your business is also a way to increase your opportunities to tender for NT Government business. The key is to target those agencies that use your goods or services and make sure they know your capabilities and are confident in your performance and abilities.

⁴ <https://icn.org.au/northern-territory>

⁵ <https://www.ntibn.com.au/about>

⁶ <https://accreditation.com.au/>

Part 2: Getting started

How will I know when opportunities are there?

Quotation and Tenders Online (QTOL)

Once registered on the [QTOL website](#)⁷ (as outlined in [Part 1](#)), you will receive an email when a tender opens in the categories you have registered in. You will be able to download tender documents and submit responses.

In the “future opportunities” section of the QTOL website you will find advance notice of future procurement opportunities for larger tenders that have yet to be released.

Wednesday editions of NT and national newspapers

Some tenders are also promoted in Regional NT and other Australian newspapers.

The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics advertise a full page of tenders released and awarded in the NT News business section every Wednesday. They also publishes future planned works on [Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics website](#)⁸.

Tender Forecast

To assist industry with planning and improve business participation opportunities, the NT Government publishes our “Tender Forecast” on a quarterly basis. This is available on our [procurement website](#)⁹.

Independent Business Networks

NT Government works with the ICNNT and NTIBN, as outlined in [Part 1](#). These independent business networks may be able to connect you to business opportunities with NT Government. You will need to register to be considered for the opportunities relevant to your business.

I’ve found a business opportunity. How do I get started?

Get the documentation

To be eligible for Government business you will, in most cases, have to submit a written quote or tender that addresses particular requirements. These are usually outlined in a document called a Request for Quote (RFQ) or Request for Tender (RFT).

If you are using the NT Government Tenders website, you can download tender documents. If invited to quote, you may also receive documents via email from the agency.

⁷ <https://tendersonline.nt.gov.au/Tender/List/#!/Current>

⁸ <https://dipl.nt.gov.au/infrastructure/projects/planned-projects>

⁹ <https://nt.gov.au/industry/government/find-tender-and-contract-opportunities/upcoming-tenders-and-contracts>

Review the requirements

When you download tender documents, it will clearly outline the essential requirements of the procurement and information you need to provide.

You should carefully review the tender documents; in particular, the specifications and assessment criteria and weightings, and note what you are required to submit and make notes about any questions you have or any gaps in the documentation.

Conditions

When you review the tender documentation, you will see that it refers to:

- the conditions of tender or quotation;
- the conditions of contract

You will need to read these tender or quotation, and contract terms before you start to develop a bid. This will give you information on your rights and obligations, as well as ours.

Conditions will outline things like lodgement requirements and assessment approach, e.g. if there is shortlisting.

Ensure you can comply with what is being asked, as this will determine if you should tender. These conditions will form part of your contract with us, if you are the successful tenderer, so understanding the conditions is an important part of the process.

Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria are the criteria by which your tender will be assessed. These are weighted according to their importance and are published in the annexure to the request for tender. You must address all of the questions for each criteria in the response schedule.

They will be specific to the works or service that the NT Government need. Information on the assessment of tenders can be read in the [Value for Territory Assessment Guide](#).

Seek further information/ask questions

Once you have read the tender documents, you can email the Enquiries Officer to ask questions from your list. Additional information or clarification may be provided if the information isn't commercially sensitive. We may issue an addendum providing further information, and if you have registered on the NT Government [QTOL website](#)¹⁰, you will be notified via email.

If an addendum is issued, you will need to acknowledge receipt in your response. This is so the assessment panel know you received it, and have included it in your response.

Industry briefing and site inspections

An industry briefing or a site inspection may be noted as having mandatory attendance, or it may be for information only to clarify any issues relating to the works or the tender documentation.

¹⁰ <https://tendersonline.nt.gov.au/Tender/List/#!/Current>

Sometimes, attendance at these briefings is mandatory and forms part of the conditions of tender. If you cannot attend the site inspection you may send another person to attend on your behalf. Your tender may be deemed inadmissible for consideration if you fail to attend a mandatory industry briefing or site inspection.

Building Northern Territory Industry Participation Plan

For tenders worth more than \$5 million, you will need to provide an Industry Participation Plan.

Industry Participation Plans are a key element of Building Northern Territory Industry Participation (BNTIPP). The NT Government use these in relation to Government purchasing and investment decision making.

Decide whether to tender

When you have reviewed the tender documents and obtained any additional clarification and information, you need to decide whether to you should submit a response. Things to consider include the following:

- do you have a good understanding of what the agency wants to buy?
- would this work be cost-effective for you?
- do you believe you have the skills/capability/products the agency is looking for and to what extent can you demonstrate this?
- do you comply with all of the conditions (of tendering and contract)?
- can you complete the contract in-house or would you need to engage subcontractors, or form a joint venture arrangement?
- would winning this contract place your business under stress?
- do you have the resources in place to fulfil the requirements?
- do you have time to develop a tender?

You may wish to prepare a tender response strategy for high-value or complex tenders.

Plan your response

Once you have decided to tender, you should plan your submission:

- start early and seek clarification or more information early in the process
- develop a timeline with key dates including your internal approvals
- note the closing date, time and method for lodging your submission
- check the size of your documents. It takes time to upload and submit large documents onto our Tenders site
- check if you are required to attend a mandatory industry brief or site inspection
- check if industry accreditation is required – do you have the requested category and group? Do you have accreditation at a higher value than your submission for the works? Do you need to contact CAL for a project specific upgrade?
- make sure you fully understand what is required to develop your tender

- understand how your submission will be evaluated. This will also help you to plan your tender response properly.

Part 3: Developing a tender

What do I include in my tender?

You must submit the response schedule and any other documents requested in the RFT/RFQ.

Your response schedule typically includes:

- the details of your legal entity
- your tenderer's declaration (including changes to conditions if permitted)
- your responses to the assessment criteria
- any other schedules specified as required
- pricing schedules

The response schedule is one of the documents provided when you download the tender from QTOL.

To ensure you provide all the required information, NT GOVERNMENTs preference is for you to use the templates provided.

More information about [tendering as a joint venture](#)¹¹ is available on the Northern Territory Government website.

Mandatory criteria

Mandatory criteria are those conditions that a business must comply with to be eligible for consideration.

Generally, they require you to demonstrate that you comply with:

- the conditions of tender
- the conditions of contract
- any other requirements listed as mandatory such as licensing and accreditation.

How you address mandatory criteria will vary according to the requirement of the particular tender. At a minimum, you will be required to make a statement to confirm that you comply.

You may also be required to provide evidence, such as copies of licences and certificates. If these are required, you should summarise the details in the body of your submission and provide the evidence as an appendix, like copies of your insurance certificates.

Response to the scope

The scope of requirements outlines the detailed requirements of the tender, and the criteria that will be used for assessment.

¹¹ <https://nt.gov.au/industry/government/sell-my-goods-and-services-to-government/tender-with-other-businesses/submit-tender-as-joint-venture>

Response to non-price criteria

You are required to provide a written responses to all non-price criterion.

These responses will tell the assessment panel of your experience, capacity and capability to provide the good or service requested.

Tips for addressing the non-price criteria

- read the criteria very carefully and break each criterion into the key points you need to address
- ensure you respond to all the questions in the response schedule
- tailor your response to suit the requirement
- answer every question
- demonstrate your ability to fulfil each criterion – don't just say you can do it – explain how you will do it
- draw on previous experiences to provide examples of your capability and experience
- be very direct in your response
- be specific about what you did when you are referring to your past performance or providing examples; don't just describe the problem or issue; it is useful to provide examples that are similar – don't use examples that are nothing like this particular project
- ensure your claims against each criterion are clear and concise
- don't make any claims that you cannot substantiate
- aim to set yourself apart from your competitors by emphasising areas where you exceed the requirements and where you feel you can add value for the agency.

Competitively price your tender

The assessors will be looking for the tender that presents the best value for Territory, not necessarily the cheapest price, and the assessors will consider price as only one factor in their assessment of your offer. Clearly state any features or benefits within the price of your tender so that any added value is clear. Always include details of any assumptions made in your offer.

Your price must be GST inclusive.

Referees

You may be requested to provide contact details for referees in your response schedule. You will usually need to include contact details for at least two referees relevant to the project requirements. It is a good idea to use the examples you listed for your past performance as referees – they are similar in value, in complexity and in scope – this will help the assessment panel understand you have done this type of work before – the referee will confirm you have done it well.

It is good practice and courteous to first contact your referees to confirm they are willing to be a referee for a particular submission before including their details.

Referees may be contacted by the agency to discuss your past performance and substantiate any written statement on capability you have made.

Other special requirements

Any other special requirements will be listed in the Specification/Response schedule. These could include:

- financial statements
- quality assurance requirements
- any relevant certificates evidencing current qualifications
- annual reports
- manuals.

You should provide a heading for each of these and include the relevant information and, if necessary, provide the full documents as an appendix.

Alternative tender

You may be able to submit an alternative tender when you have a different method of meeting the scope of requirements.

The annexure to the conditions of tendering and contract will specify if alternative tenders are allowed.

It is important to clearly identify your response as 'Alternative Offer. Sometimes you will also need to submit a 'Conforming Offer' as well. Clearly mark which one is which. It will make it difficult to assess your offer, if you only list your offer as alternate in your listed assumptions. Clearly indicate to the assessment panel that your offer is alternate.

Submit your tender on time

Before submitting your tender, make sure that you correctly sign all appropriate tender forms. This includes ensuring all addendums (if any), have been acknowledged and submitted with your response.

Also make sure you submit your tender response using the correct method and before the closing time (these details are on the RFT or RFQ documents).

Late submissions may be accepted in exceptional circumstances, and only if approved by the requesting agency. Plan to get your response in one day before the closing time and remember that the Northern Territory's time zone is Central Standard Time.

Part 4: The assessment process

What happens once I have submitted my tender?

Acknowledgment of receipt

After you have submitted your tender, you will receive confirmation that it has been submitted. Once your tender is received, you are unlikely to hear anything while the assessment of offers is undertaken

Admissibility

Your tender documents will set out a range of requirements that your offer must comply with in order for it to be admissible for assessment.

When the tender has closed, there will be an initial assessment to make sure your offer complies with all the mandatory and discretionary requirements. Your conditions will outline what the mandatory requirements are, and what the discretionary requirements are.

If you fail to meet the mandatory requirements, your offer will be declared inadmissible. If you fail to meet the discretionary requirements, it may result in your tender being inadmissible.

Should your offer be inadmissible, you will be notified in writing. The notice will identify why your response was inadmissible and it will also outline your appeal rights to the Procurement Review Board.

This excludes late submissions, as these submissions have to be assessed for admissibility through a different process.

Shortlisting

The shortlisting process was introduced to facilitate early advice to tenderers so they can plan their workforce and explore other opportunities if they are not shortlisted. There is no rule about how many tenderers are shortlisted in, or out, it depends on the offers received.

Your conditions will advise if shortlisting will be used as part of the assessment process. There are a number of categories that your response will be shortlisted on.

If the agency undertakes a shortlisting process, you will be advised on the status of your offer. You will either be shortlisted and further assessment will be undertaken, or you have been not shortlisted and your offer has been put aside until the full assessment and award has been finalised.

Request for information

Any time during the assessment process, you may be contacted to clarify information in your submission. The request will be in writing (via email) and the information will be required from you, also in writing, within a set timeframe.

You are not permitted to change anything about your tender at this point – the purpose here is only to clarify information you have already submitted.

Presentations

You may be invited to meet with the assessment panel to present or demonstrate your offer. If this is the case, you will be advised in advance regarding what to expect at the presentation and what you will need to prepare for it.

The assessment panel may request that you present particular information about your product, or demonstrate it to the panel, or simply to respond to questions the panel will ask. It is very important that you do not introduce new or revised information at this time.

Who assesses my submission?

An assessment panel

Your response will be assessed by an assessment panel. A panel is normally made up of people who are subject experts and people who are responsible for the procurement

Probity Advisor

Higher risk procurements may be undertaken under the oversight of a Probity Advisor. They are external advisors to, and independent of, the NT Government and not a member of the assessment panel. The Probity Advisor's role is to observe and review the evaluation to ensure the proper processes are followed.

How is my submission assessed?

Assessment against the assessment criteria

Your submission will be assessed against the assessment criteria specified in the Request for Tender document. It will be assessed for its relative strengths and weaknesses against each criterion, and will be scored accordingly.

Consideration of price

The assessment panel will include your price in the assessment of Value for Territory by generally applying a formula using the assessment weighting and a normalisation process. They will expect to be able to understand clearly the price of your offer and exactly what is included and not included in the price.

It is important that you price each and all components of the requirement. If you submit a price that is aberrant you may be set aside as representing too high a risk. Often panels will ask you to confirm you have included the whole requirement or if there has been an error.

Assessment of Value for Territory

NT Government does not necessarily choose the cheapest quote or tender. The selection of the successful bidder will be made on the basis of best Value for Territory.

The assessment of best Value for Territory involves determining the extent to which a response delivers the best combination of whole-of-life costs and quality (non-cost) factors.

More information on the Value for Territory Assessment Framework can be found [here](#)

Negotiations

The assessment panel may enter into negotiations. Negotiations may focus on any aspect of the response, such as the price, the terms and conditions of contract, the design or the completion timeframe.

Part 5: Notification of outcome and debriefing

How will I be notified?

You will not hear the outcome of the procurement until all submissions have been assessed, at which time you will receive a notice advising that you have either been successful or unsuccessful.

What happens if I am the preferred provider?

If you are successful, you will be contacted by the Contract Manager prior to commencement of contract delivery.

Contract established

Your contract will typically be made up of:

- the conditions of contract and any special conditions of contract
- the notification of acceptance
- the request for tender
- your tender response
- any other documents stated as forming part of the contract (e.g. acceptance of negotiations, clarifications, etc.).

What happens if I am unsuccessful?

You will receive a letter advising you that your offer was not successful and has not been accepted. It will tell you who was accepted, and their total price for the requirement.

It is important that you look at how your submission can be improved for next time.

Debrief

You can request feedback on your tender from the assessment panel.

The main purpose of a debrief is to provide feedback to help you improve future tenders. It will give you information about the strengths and weakness of your own tender, not to justify the selection of the successful offer.

Discussion will be limited to your offer. You may ask the debrief panel how your offer was assessed and in most instances assessment scores can be released. When the score cannot be released you can ask the debrief panel why assessment scores have been withheld.

No comparisons can be made with any other offers and no aspect of the other offers, including the successful tender, can be discussed.

A debrief also provides you with an opportunity to give us feedback of your experience during the tender process. It is recommended that if you have specific questions for the assessment panel to ask during the debrief, you provide them with them in advance. This will maximise what you get out of the experience.

It is important that you listen to the feedback. Although you may be disappointed about the outcome, the contract has been awarded, and this is your opportunity to learn where you can add to your response next time.

At the debriefing interview, at least one member from the evaluation panel (usually the panel chair) will attend and the discussion will cover:

- how your offer performed against the assessment criteria
- the strengths of your offer
- the weaknesses of your offer.

What if I have a complaint or dispute?

Complaints process

If you are concerned that you have not been treated fairly in a tender process you are entitled to make a complaint.

To do this, you can;

- 1. Contact the agency concerned and discuss your concerns with the person named on the tender documentation.**

When you make your complaint, you should include the following information:

- your name, address and contact details
- tender or contract details, including reference numbers
- the nature of the complaint; for example, whether the complaint is about tender specifications, the evaluation process, or a failure to seek public tenders
- all relevant supporting information or documentation.

Agencies are required to investigate all complaints in a timely manner and provide feedback to you.

- 2. You can contact the Buy Local Industry Advocate for the procurement to be independently reviewed**

You can refer a complaint to the Buy Local Industry Advocate (BLIA). The BLIA acts as an independent link between local business and the NT Government. The BLIA investigates complaints from industry on contract awards that haven't adhered to our Buy Local policy or procurement rules. Contact the Buy Local Industry Advocate by calling 08 8999 7799 or email buylocal.advocate@nt.gov.au

- 3. If you believe that there has been improper conduct demonstrated in the procurement process, you can complain to the Independent Commissioner against Corruption (ICAC)**

ICAC is a specialist investigator with a focus on Government corruption. Its role is to be responsible for receiving, identifying and investigating reports of corruption and misconduct by government, public bodies and public officers and those who receive Government money including contractors

and grant recipients. If you believe there has been corrupt during the procurement process, please contact [ICAC¹²](#).

Will information about my tender be confidential?

Publication of awarded contract details

Government policies and procedures require that certain information relating to contracts awarded must be disclosed publicly. Details of all awarded contracts valued at \$15,000 and over are published on the Tenders website.

Details that will appear on our tenders' website include:

- name of successful tenderer
- street address of business
- value of contract

Tenders that are approved to be released on a select basis, that is where the procuring agency chooses who is given the opportunity to submit an offer, are also published after award.

Confidentiality

The NT Government is committed to ensuring that Government contracting is conducted openly and transparently and that confidentiality provisions do not unnecessarily restrict scrutiny of contracts. All submissions and information acquired by the NT Government throughout the procurement process other than that to be publicly disclosed as above, will remain confidential between NT Government and the contractor.

¹² <https://icac.nt.gov.au/home>

Part 6: Glossary

Term	Definition
Alternative tender	An alternative tender is a tender that offers an alternative solution to the technical requirement stated in the RFT/RFQ
Agency	For the purposes of this guide, Government agencies are those agencies which are subject to the Financial Management Act 2016 and are subject to the purchasing guidelines outlined on the NT Government Purchasing website.
Assessment criteria	Assessment criteria are used to assess the merit of offers received. The assessment criteria are specified in the RFT/RFQ
Buy Local Industry Advocate (BLIA)	Acts as an independent link between local business and the NT Government. Responsible for investigating procurement complaints where agencies haven't adhered to the Buy Local Policy.
Conditions of contract	Conditions of contract define the rights and obligations of both parties once the contract has been awarded. This includes such things as insurance requirements, price variation clauses and appointment of subcontractors
Conditions of tender/quote	The rules governing what a submission should contain, how it should be submitted and how it will be assessed
Consultant	A consultant is a particular type of contractor (refer contractor definition) who is engaged to provide recommendations or specialist or professional advice to assist or influence agency decision-making.
Contract	A contract is a written agreement for the purchase of supplies
Contractor	A contractor is an individual or organisation engaged under a contract (other than as an employee) to provide goods and/or services to an agency. A contractor will usually work under the supervision of an agency manager.
Enquiries Officer	The person nominated in the RFQ/RFQ for any queries about the quote or tender
Independent Commissioner against Corruption (ICAC)	The ICAC is a specialist investigator with a focus on Government corruption. They investigate reports of corruption and misconduct by Government, public bodies and public officers.
Probity Adviser	An independent party engaged to provide advice on probity issues before and during the process of tendering to ensure the process is fair and in accordance with the NT Government procurement framework.
Procurement	This is the purchasing or acquisition of goods or services.
Prequalification	Prequalification classifies you according to your expertise and capability in specific work categories within a specific financial range. Prequalification is only required for building and construction/roads and bridges consultants and contractors. It is not available for goods and services
Quotations and Tenders Online (QTOL)	An online portal which allows businesses to identify future tender opportunities, download and respond to quotes and tenders, and identify awarded contracts
Request for Quotation (RFQ)	A Request for Quotation can be either a verbal or written request for offers from businesses capable of providing a specified work, good or service.

Term	Definition
Request for Tender (RFT)	A Request for Tender is a document soliciting offers from businesses capable of providing a specified work, good or service. RFT's are usually publically advertised
Specifications	A document that clearly, accurately and completely describes the essential requirements of the goods, services and/or works being purchased.
Territory Enterprise	An enterprise operating within the NT, with a significant permanent presence in the NT and employing NT residents.
Tender	A proposal, bid, or offer that is submitted in response to a RFT
Value for Territory	<p>The response delivering the best combination of whole-of-life costs and quality (non-costs) factors.</p> <p>Factors that may be considered in assessing value for Territory include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fit for purpose and quality • whole of life costs (including support, warranty, licensing and disposal • efficiency and effectiveness • timeliness • flexibility • innovation • local benefit • intangible costs and benefits • contribution to NT Government priorities.