

**Guidelines for choosing the right web-development company on receipt of grant funding; the e-Health tendering process for low value tenders (£5K - £50K).**

This process should be followed AFTER you have been granted funding to create/develop a website for an online internet intervention. If the total amount of funding you have been granted for this purpose is less than £5K, you are not legally required to put your bid out to tender; you must only obtain three separate quotes from three different companies. If the value of the work is over £5K, UCL require you to tender for the work. Current guidance about the regulation that applies, by project value, can be found here:

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/procurement/suppliers/regulations>

If the value of the work is over 173K, you will be subject to EU regulation. UCL procurement will be able to advise you on this.

*Note: If your tender amount is very large, it can sometimes be helpful to break it down into smaller chunks, and put out to tender for these separately (e.g., separating design and development work).*

When trying to find a company to work with on your project, it is always good practice to follow the UCL tendering procedures as guidance when trying to establish working links with an external web development company, as it will help you find the most suitable company, and you will benefit from having a clear idea in advance about what you are expecting from them, and what they will be expecting from you. It should also prevent you from running into avoidable problems further down the line (eg work not being completed on time and over spending, inadequate lines of communication etc). It's sensible to have a professional contract drawn up at the start of the collaboration to support both parties.

There are eight main steps to finding the right company for your project. These guidelines can be adapted to each particular project, and extra steps can be added in if necessary. This guidance is based on a process followed in 2013.

**1) Form a 'tender team' who are willing to help you by participating in the process:**

It is advisable that your team consists of the Principal Investigator, the Research Associate/Project coordinator, a contact from the UCL Procurement team

(<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/procurement/about>), and a contact from the central UCL web services (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/web-services/contact-us>; [web-support@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:web-support@ucl.ac.uk)).

Start by contacting UCL Procurement, who should be able to advise you on who you need to speak to. Meet with them very early on to determine your requirements.

UCL Procurement will be able to inform you of the process you should follow, provide templates for the documents you will need, and talk you through the steps/legal side of things and help you create timelines for the process etc. (*See appendix 1 for an example of a timeline*) They will also be writing the contract up for you, so their input will be valuable from the start. They will need you to clearly outline the project when you speak to them, so that they can better determine your requirements.

UCL Web Services will be able to give input on the technical side of things, and offer opinions and advice on the IT requirements etc.

Establish who is willing and available to help you for the duration of your tendering timeline, and organise a meeting with your team as early on in the process as possible. Your team will help you by offering input when you are writing the Invitation to Tender (ITT), help you with the shortlisting process, sit on the interview panel, and provide general advice/guidance where they can.

## 2) Develop the Invitation to Tender (ITT)

This is a document which outlines to companies what the project is and what you require of them. It essentially outlines the work that you wish them to do, and the standards that you expect them to meet.

UCL procurement will provide a template to complete for this. The main section you need to complete is section 3. You are required to complete the first column (your specification), and the second (degree of importance of each requirement). The companies are required to complete the two right-hand columns. A screenshot is shown below of a form completed in April 2013.

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 ITT Ref UCL-PS-365 – IT Services for the development of an interactive intervention to increase condom use

### Contract Period

The contract period is from April 2013 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015, with no flexibility for extension.

### 1. System Requirements

UCL Specification		Contractors Technical Solution	
Ref no	Requirement	Degree of importance # 1 = least important 3 = most important	Compliant? (Y, PC, NC, N/A)  Contractor response Please fill in your response to the specification here. If additional information is attached, please give document references
1.1.	<p><b>Component 1:</b></p> <p>The interactive intervention: this will include a website with automated text messages and emails. The specific nature and sexual health content will be decided in our initial work with sexual health experts, and men from sexual health clinics. However, the content is likely to include:</p> <p><i>Information; self-reflection activities and decision-making activities on the topics of sexually transmitted infections (STI) and their treatment; regretted sex; sexual risk-taking, condom types and sizes; communication skills; eroticising condom use; erections and condoms; sensation and condoms; sexual pleasure, sexual problems.</i></p> <p>We hope to use information and activities to emphasise assessment of personal risk, choosing condom size, correct condom use, and other specific barriers to condom use which users indicate are important to them.</p> <p>All of the content will be written with user input at every stage, ensuring that content is relevant and appealing to all men. We wish to include personalised, tailored feedback, and modules which require users to actively think and make decisions. The website should also allow for personalised feedback, for example information tailored by gender of sexual partner/s, and STI diagnosis (e.g., chlamydia, gonorrhoea), thus providing only information that is relevant to individuals.</p> <p>Potential ideas for content include information on condom use and sex tips presented in an appealing way, and a function whereby participants can form their own simple plans about intentions to use condoms, which can be stored</p>	3	

Figure 1 Screen shot of ITT section 3

Section 3 of the ITT delineates a number of aspects of the project, for example:

- **System requirements:** This refers to what you are developing and what you want it to do. Try to be as detailed as possible. This may be difficult if you are planning to use an iterative, user-led, development process. If this is the case, make this clear. It is important to ensure your developer can work in this manner.

- **Performance specification:** The level of performance you require from the system (e.g., performance testing, security standards)
- **Technical features** (e.g., the programming language, database requirements)
- **Reports and enquiries:** What reports you will require from the system, for example, outputs of data collected (from questionnaires, or website usage data), and how these will be provided.
- **Compatibility:** Requirements for compatibility, for example, with platforms and devices, and also with UCL IT systems if UCL are to host the website (during the project or at the end of the project)
- **Project management:** For example, what you require of them in terms of contact, staff support. You may wish to request a dedicated project manager.
- **Implementation plan:** Outline your requirements for timelines; ask whether they can meet this. You will be required to provide a plan of what deliverables you require and when (e.g., wire frames of web pages by a certain date; when you will require a final product). This should also include an indication of what percentage of the budget will be paid to the developer at each stage (e.g., 10% paid on production of initial drafts of the website). Think carefully about what your milestones are, and how you might spread the payments. Make sure the criteria that must be met for each payment are clear and concrete.
- **Test plan:** If you require the company to do formal testing of the product, you can state this here and ask for plans they may have for this.
- **Training:** Outline any training you might require, and/or ask them to say what training will be available (e.g., for the research team to use the content management system)
- **Licensing:** Ask them to outline any requirements for licensing (e.g., whether a software license will need to be purchased)
- **Escrow arrangements:** 'Escrow' is where an independent third party holds onto an asset/monetary sum until certain conditions have been met. In section, you can ask your supplier to outline any escrow arrangements that may be available at the end of the project. There is a standard clause in the contract regarding this; however, UCL Procurement should be able to provide more advice if you wish.
- **Documentation:** Ask what documentation they will provide (e.g., user guides), and any charges that may be incurred for these.
- **Support and maintenance requirements:** Outline your requirements for support and enquire what support they will give; for example, when they will be contactable, procedures for logging problems, and target fix times. It might be helpful to have a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the company. You could provide a draft of this as an appendix (UCL Procurement can provide you with an example SLA).
- **On-going developments:** Ask them how they will adapt to on-going developments. You may wish to ask them how they might respond to feedback from users here.
- **Liquidated damages:** This is an agreement that compensation will be paid in the event that the supplier do not provide what they have promised. There should be a clause in the contract they must agree to regarding this. This section should ask that they can confirm agreement.

The companies will want to find out as much as possible about the project and what they will be responsible for, and how much time and resources they will need to dedicate to the project. You will

need to produce a specification for them which provides an outline of these things. The input from Procurement and Web Services will be valuable here.

Remember that the web-developers are not researchers and will not understand research jargon. Include as much clear information as you can using timelines, diagrams, details of your target audience etc. Give working examples where possible, and keep it simple and clear. Try to imagine you are external to the project, and ask yourself “Would this be comprehensible to the web developers?”

Producing the ITT may require multiple drafts to make sure everything is included and the team is happy with it. **Allow plenty of time for the process of ITT development.**

Don't forget to think about issues such as

- Copyright
- Data protection
- Intellectual Property (you may need to consult with your funder about this)
- Who will host the website (Check whether you need compatibility with UCL systems)
- How much time the company will need to spend on the project (e.g. will they need to attend project meetings?)
- Whether you would like to have a probationary period
- Who will be providing the creative content
- Whether the content be written by the researchers, and loaded onto the website; and, if so, whether the researchers will need training on how to upload the content
- Lines of communication and accountability
- What will happen if the company folds

The structure of the ITT template should cover most of these issues.

### **3) Find out which companies you would like to invite to bid for the work**

Try to find as many companies as possible that you think may be willing and able to create the type of content and style of website that you are looking for. Talk to the other members of the e-Health Unit, as they may be able to offer some advice. Use your contacts within the department, and do a Google search for different companies to try and get as many contact details as possible. It is advisable to factor this into your timeline, as it can be time consuming.

Attending events to network with developers in this area can be useful. A group called iBehave (<http://ibehave.net/>) run meet-ups which bring together health behaviour specialists with technology specialists. Attending these meet-ups can be a helpful way to make contacts.

Many companies that you invite may be unavailable to do the work at that time and others may not be as suitable as you first thought, so it's good to have as many possibilities as you can, and give yourself enough time to do some proper research into this. Many of the details of the actual web developing companies are not immediately obvious and cannot be found on the websites you find, so you will need to contact with the sites and find out which companies they used.

If the value of your project is between 50K and 173K, you are required to advertise openly on the Gov.uk website (<https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>). If it is over 173K, you must advertise in the OJEU – the journal which advertises all EU procurement tenders. UCL Procurement will be able to advise you about these processes.

#### 4) Releasing your ITT

Set a date for your ITT release. It can be helpful to release your ITT through the UCL Procurement system, InTend (although this isn't necessary for smaller projects – Procurement will be able to advise). This process is completely handled by Procurement; you simply need to let them have all of the appropriate documents (i.e. the ITT) and a list of suppliers that you wish to invite to tender.

All contact is mediated by UCL Procurement, rather than directly between you and the supplier – companies must submit all questions and queries through InTend.

#### 5) Hold an open day

Once you have sent out the ITT, it can be very helpful to hold an open day for interested developers. Invite interested companies along for a half day session, where you can provide more information about the project, and give developers the opportunity to ask questions. It can be helpful to have your IT/web specialist at the open day – there will be a lot of technical questions, which you may not feel able to answer accurately.

You will need to record any questions and responses from the open day, as they will need to be distributed to all interested parties (including those who didn't attend the open day). Developers can also submit questions independently of the open day (e.g., through the InTend system). **You must distribute all questions and responses to all interested companies** (this can be done through the InTend system).

Aim to distribute the questions and responses from the open day as soon as possible after the open day. Also, remember to have a cut-off date by when all questions must have been submitted (e.g. around a week after the open day).

#### 6) Deadline for the receipt of the bids and the shortlisting

You must set a deadline for the submission of tenders (at least 2 weeks after the open day). Distribute the tenders to all of your tendering team – you will need someone in UCL procurement and someone from web services to review the tenders, in addition to reviewing them yourself.

*Note – make sure you set aside plenty of time for reviewing tenders – they can be very long documents, and you may have a number of them to review.*

UCL Procurement will be able to provide you with a scoring sheet to review the tenders. This should be populated with the criteria that you have set out in your ITT (Note – it is helpful to prepare this

sheet before the deadline, whilst you are waiting for the tenders to be submitted). Use the scoring sheet to score each of the tenders.

At least one person should score all the tenders; although everyone in the team should read them all. You may find it difficult to score some of the sections (e.g. the technical specification) – seek advice from your team member in web services about these sections. It may be helpful to ask people with specific knowledge to score specific sections.

The scoring sheet has a ‘notes’ column for each criteria. Try and utilise this as much as possible; it will help to remind you why you gave the score that you did (without having to repeatedly refer back to the tender), and UCL procurement will need this information in order to give feedback to unsuccessful tenderers.

Once you have all read and scored the tenders, hold a team meeting to shortlist applicants. Decide on 3-4 companies to invite for interview.

### **7) Interviewing applicants**

When interviewing companies, it can be helpful to ask them to do a presentation (Note – they may have special IT requirements – make sure you ask them about this). Think about the topic you want them to address– it may be something that you think is very important to the project (e.g., how they plan to work in response to an iterative development process), or a demonstration of previous work in a similar area.

Prepare interview questions based on your ITT criteria.

The scoring sheet you will receive from UCL Procurement has a section to score interviewees. Populate this with your interview questions, and use this to make your decisions.

It is important to have your full tendering team on the interview panel. All members of the panel should score interviewees.

### **8) Make your final decision and draw up a contract**

After the interviews/presentations, make a decision about who you would like to award the contract to, based on your tender and interview scores. UCL Procurement will draw up a contract which will need to be signed by both the company and yourself (file your copy in the project files), and you can start the work!

#### **Top tips:**

- Start early – the process will probably take longer than expected
- Set realistic timelines and dates (see example timeline below)

#### **Appendix 1: Sample Timeline**

ITT document preparation: Mid-January

ITT release date: 26<sup>th</sup> March

Open day: 19<sup>th</sup> April

Deadline for submitting questions: 24<sup>th</sup> April

All questions and responses circulated: 29<sup>th</sup> April

Deadline for tender submission: 8<sup>th</sup> May

Interviews: 22<sup>nd</sup> May

Award of contract: 24<sup>th</sup> May