



North East Procurement Organisation
Guildhall
Quayside
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 3AF
Telephone: 0191 433 5949
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Mrs Franklin
(sent by email)

19th December 2019

Dear Mrs Franklin,

Re: Freedom of Information request - GRI - Neutral Vendor

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received 8th December 2019. Due to the nature of the questions raised, the response has been formulated using a table as found below.

Number	Question	Response
1	How many agency staff suppliers have signed an agreement to become part of the neutral vendor model for the above period?	21
2	Of those agency staff suppliers who have signed an agreement, how many have been invoiced for an agency worker in the above period?	15
3	How many agency staff suppliers have placed more than 10 agency staff?	6
4	Of those agency staff suppliers who have signed an agreement, how many have had an opportunity to propose specific agency workers?	21
5	From the receipt of payment to join the GRI neutral vendor supply chain, what is the average time it has taken for agency staff suppliers to have the opportunity to propose specific agency workers?	2.86 days

6	What are the total fees GRI have received from agency staff suppliers for the above period?	Please see below
7	How many of the agency staff suppliers who have signed an agreement are SME's?	13
8	How many agency staff workers in total have been provided in the above period?	4,397
9	What is the total value of rebate which NEPO have received from GRI for the above period?	Please see below

Question 6. What are the total fees GRI have received from agency staff suppliers for the above period?

In respect of the disclosure of the total fees GRI has received from agency staff suppliers for the period as stated within question 6 of this request, we are unable to provide this information as it is exempt from disclosure under section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Refusal Notice – Section 43(2) Freedom of Information Act 2000

Section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) provides that:

“Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it)”.

In this instance, we believe that disclosure of the information requested would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) and its members. We also have reason to believe that disclosure of the total amount of fees GRI has received would prejudice the commercial interests of GRI as associated with this solution. We have not contacted GRI for their views on the request as, even if they are happy for the information to be disclosed, the likely prejudice of NEPO and its member's interests would lead us to refuse the request.

NEPO and its members would be likely to suffer prejudice to its commercial interests if the withheld information were to be disclosed as it would result in it losing the confidence of its suppliers and bidders if commercially sensitive information including the total amount of fees received were subsequently disclosed. Bidders are generally becoming concerned about the likelihood of

disclosure of bids and this is potentially leading to NEPO receiving either non-compliant or fewer bids from suppliers. The reason that we believe the exemption applies is that the information disclosed would possibly allow those who access the information to gain an unfair advantage in future bids by obtaining information which would unfairly prejudice other suppliers in future processes (which will invariably take place). As a result, NEPO would be prejudiced as it would lose the ability to properly compare the quality of one submission against another as part of the renewal of this solution.

This exemption is subject to the public interest test.

Public interest test

There is an inherent public interest in ensuring that the NEPO receives value for money in procuring works, goods and services. This is because NEPO has a duty to its clients to provide high quality goods and services that achieve the best possible price for works, goods and services. This in turn ensures that public money is used to best effect. We recognise that transparency in procurement is important in enabling the public to hold public sector organisations to account for the spending of public money, our duty to clients to provide high quality works, goods and services and to achieve the best possible price for those works, goods and services. This in turn ensures that public money is used to best effect. However, in this case, we believe that the balance of public interest lies in favour of maintaining the exemption as disclosure of aspects taken from the evaluation process is important for NEPO to be able to identify high quality suppliers.

As a result, we are refusing part of your request under section 43(2) of the Act.

Question 9. What is the total value of rebate which NEPO have received from GRI for the above period?

NEPO operates a Framework Agreement Management Rebate arrangement whereby the Neutral Vendor [GRI Limited] will be required to repay to NEPO a value of up to £0.10 per hour per contract in respect of all orders placed by NEPO or any Contracting Authority under the Framework Contract and subsequent Call-Off Contracts.

If you are dissatisfied with how your request has been handled you may contact the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

Yours Sincerely

North East Procurement Organisation Governance Team