

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL MODEL QUESTION

Process

Q1: Why are we choosing to evaluate environmental criteria in our tenders when we are also gathering climate change plans from our suppliers, is this not enough at this stage?

A1: We are choosing to evaluate as this is a critical priority of both NHSScotland and Scottish Government. If our supply chain is to be Net Zero by 2045 (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/nhs-scotland-climate-emergency-sustainability-strategy-2022-2026/>) then we need to balance short term commercial priorities with long term strategic priorities. The critical component in exerting our influence on the supply base is how we award our contracts. If we choose not to evaluate environmental criteria we are in effect choosing the short term at the expense of the long term. The suppliers we want to work with will be taking the actions necessary already to meet, and exceed the criteria that we will apply.

Q2: Will suppliers be given more time to submit after publication date?

A2: In most cases our suppliers are aware of when tenders are due to come up but, during the trial, we will publish in advance which tenders will be included. We will review feedback throughout the trial and review if additional time is required to respond to the question on a per tender basis, which will be communicated to bidders via the PCS-Tender question and answer messaging facility.

Q3: When multiple products are involved in the tender, what and how many examples will you be looking for?

A3: Where there are multiple products involved in the tender, we are only expecting examples for the primary product and not all the products you may be bidding for.

Q4: Does the value of £250,000 refer to the supplier or buyer revenue per lot?

A4: The £250,000 value is based on the forecasted value of the lot per year.

There are some tenders where multiple products may be in scope however we will only require one primary product submission per bidder, this can be based on the bidders' calculated highest revenue product.

Q5: How will this work for contracts when there are many products included in the tender e.g. Therapy or Care Area?

A5: As previous answer.

Q6: Can the responses relate to product packaging or does it have to relate to the product itself?

A6: Any aspect of the product's value chain can be included. This includes the product packaging.

Q7: Will there be a process put in place to compare the quality of data received across different bidders for a specific tender?

A7: Responses will be evaluated independently and based on the criteria set out in the tender documentation. Responses will not be evaluated by comparing against other bids.

Q8: During the trial period (from 1st December 2023 until 31st May 2024), will the questions be marked?

A8: During the trial period, we would ask that you respond to the question on an information only basis. As part of the tendering exercise the procurement team will provide the score that the response would attain if it were actually being formally scored. This will provide bidders with a detailed understanding on how their submission has been assessed.

Q9: With new standards to be achieved, what will be the benchmark for quantifiable evidence?

A9: 3rd party verification would be ideal however, in the absence of this, a calculation of reduced or avoided impacts based on generally accepted standards would be required e.g. GHG accounting standards.

Q10: How would you like the information gathered, to be presented?

A10: Short case studies would be preferable with embedded calculations and methodologies explained. We would expect around 2 A4 pages is sufficient to cover both examples.

Q11: To reduce work for suppliers for all tenders, have you considered capturing the information in the way that we do for Pharma QC, but for environmental data?

A11: We can certainly consider this and will explore any opportunities to reduce additional workload.

Q12: Will progress updates be expected throughout the lifecycle of the contract?

A12: We expect updates to be provided by our procurement team in line with standard practice.

After the tender process, we'd expect the successful bidder to work with our procurement lead on ongoing developments throughout the contract duration.

Q13: Will feedback be received during the 6 month trial?

A13: Updates will be shared on our Sustainability Action website <https://nhssustainabilityaction.co.uk/>

Q14: After the 6 month period, will supplier feedback be considered into the final model question?

A14: A review will take place after the 6 month trial and all feedback received will be considered. Changes may then be made to the question and evaluation process if required.

Q15: How are the procurement team able to fairly score responses? For example, a supplier could state a reduction in packaging but the change in material is very carbon intensive to manufacture.

A15: It is for bidders to state the true benefits of material changes to the product value chain. please refer to Q9.

Q16: How will NSS engage with suppliers during the 6 month process if no products are up for tender?

A16: We plan to provide updates to the relevant industry forum groups and through our Sustainability Action website. <https://nhssustainabilityaction.co.uk/>

Q17: Do all points have to be addressed on all three questions or can the commodity manager select which is most appropriate?

A17: The Model Question is standardised and stated in three parts (A, B and C) this is merely to demonstrate the different elements of the value chain that can be addressed as part of the response. We do not expect all three parts to be answered, two examples from across the three parts are required.

Q18: Is it mandatory to complete the Evergreen questionnaire?

A18: This is NHS England policy and is not related to this model question.

Q19: Will the questions be asked at the PPQ or the tender evaluation stage?

A19: The Environmental Model Question is an award criterion and will be asked as part of the tender evaluation stage.

Q20: Will you differentiate between net zero and carbon neutral (offset)?

A20: Offsetting would not be accepted as a valid response as this would not be considered part of the value chain of the product tendered.

Q21: Will you share the slides and recording post meeting?

A21: Slides used for the engagement session are available on the Sustainability Action website. <https://nhssustainabilityaction.co.uk/>

A recorded on-demand video is also available which talks through the Environmental Model Question.

Timeline

Q22: Where there is a complex value chain, it may be challenging to get information from global partners or third party suppliers at a product level.

A22: The trial will allow us and bidders to understand the challenges, however our expectation is that bidders should have detailed information on the provenance of the products they offer to NHSScotland.

Q23: How do your timelines fit around NHS England requirements for product level information, expected in 2028?

A23: The product level information we are requesting as part of the Environmental Model question is limited to 2 examples specific to any aspect of the product's value chain.

We are not expecting details of product carbon footprints or detailed Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs).

We align with the other UK partners and the requirements of the Model Question are not the same as the product level information proposed to be introduced by NHS England in 2028.

Q24: The timelines for introduction have been short. What is the reason for this?

A24: We have been engaging with numerous stakeholders throughout this year and believe, with our net zero targets, we need to start including environmental sustainability within our tenders.

The trial will run for 6 months as information only and only in 5 tenders. Post trial, we will conduct a full review to instruct next steps.

Q25: Due to the 4 week timeline, would it be possible to ask bidders to provide data outside of a tender on key products that they currently supply?

A25: The question will be part of the tender process, any concerns over timelines can be raised with the procurement lead on the specific tender, as this is information only it will not affect the award process. Feedback on timelines will also be gathered during the trial period.

Scope

Q26: Will tenders be excluded where there are no sustainability components?

A26: It is universally recognised that every product has some impact on the environment, therefore subject to a successful trial we would anticipate environmental questions being applied to all product tenders in time.

Q27: Are medicine/pharmaceutical tenders included?

A27: At the moment we have decided to exclude medicines from the scope of this activity. This allows us to engage with the industry on some of the complexities around medicine tenders. We will communicate further when medicines are to be included. We plan to have a similar trial period for medicines before implementing any mandatory weightings.

Q28: Will vaccine tenders be excluded in the trial?

A28: For the moment, we have excluded medicines from the scope of the trial. This includes vaccines.

Q29: If medicines are brought into scope after 6 months, will they have their own trial or would 10% assessment apply immediately?

A29: see Q27.

Q30: Will you be discussing ISO 14001 environmental policy?

A30: This is not a requirement of the question however you should include accreditations to your response if this has been requested as part of the tender.

Q31: Will carbon reduction plans and net zero targets be included as part of this question?

A31: Carbon Reduction plans and Net Zero targets shouldn't be included in the response unless specifically linked to the product being tendered.

These organisational level details would be captured as part of the supplier selection stage.

Q32: Will the information currently available from suppliers on Evergreen be used?

A32: Not applicable for the model question.

Q33: When using a third-party partner, are we required to know their product and manufacturing processes?

A33: See Q22.

Q34: How does this approach align to that of the other Nations?

A34: We engage and collaborate with the other UK Healthcare partners and align where possible. NHS England and NHS Wales currently have mandatory sustainability questions included in their tenders and we believe this approach is similar to theirs.

Q35: Will there be different requirements between companies supplying products they control the license and manufacture for and those that handle distribution and do not have control of packaging design and manufacturing?

A35: We will apply the same approach to all bidders submitting in-scope products.

Q36: If tenders are not imminent, will the question still have to be asked now?

A36: The question will be included at tender stage so if you are not bidding for a current tender, we do not expect responses from our suppliers out with this process.

Q37: When can we expect to see the criteria?

A37: The criteria can be found on our overview document, hosted on the Sustainability Action webpage. <https://nhssustainabilityaction.co.uk/>

Q38: Who is our main point of contact?

A38: nss.ssgovernance@nhs.scot

Q39: Are medical product consumables included?

A39: Medical product consumables are included in the scope of the trial.

Q40: Is capital equipment and machinery included?

A40: Capital equipment often includes elements of maintenance or repair so, for the moment, this is excluded from the scope of the trial.

Q41: For some suppliers, medicines and products may be considered the same thing. Can you please clarify the difference between medicines and products?

A41: To avoid any confusion, we will publish the in-scope tenders on the Sustainability Action website. <https://nhssustainabilityaction.co.uk/>

Q42: Will the product tendered require to have a life cycle assessment and a carbon reduction plan?

A42: We do not require product carbon footprints or detailed Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs).

Scoring

Q43: What if the tender is repeated on an annual basis? Can I resubmit a previously submitted example?

A43: Yes, as set out in scoring guidance for a “good” response;

“Two specific examples demonstrating progress over the past three years are required.”

If your example is within the past three years this can be re-presented as evidence.

Q44: If this question attracts a 10% weighting, isn't that an opportunity for bidders to raise prices?

A44: This remains to be seen, however during a competitive process a bidder needs to balance all considerations in order to optimise their bid. By asking this question we wish to reward those bidders who are committed to reducing harmful impacts on our environment which as we know is intrinsically linked to public health.

Q45: If a supplier does not specifically refer to the product and how it is supported by the plans provided, but instead refers to the corporate sign up to recognised climate change reporting initiatives such as Global Compact, the Global Reporting Initiative, Dow Jones sustainability index. Or if a detailed corporate sustainability report is submitted showing measurement of key areas such as energy, waste and water use but without reference to the specific product, how would this be scored?

A45: This response is likely to score as a '1', 'Poor'. The purpose of this question is to understand the impacts at product level. As this is an award criterion, the question needs to be linked to the subject matter of the contract. Company wide measures are requested as part of the Carbon Reduction Plan approach which is requested at selection stage and through the NHS England “Evergreen” system which NHSS full intends to utilise.

Q46: I have two examples that are in the final stages of deployment, however we have made the commitment based on quantifiable and evidence based calculations, would these be awarded a 'Good' score?

A46: In the scoring guidance we have stated,

“The bidder providing evidence of processes in place or actions already taken that have led or will lead (based on available evidence) to a measurable reduction of assessed harmful environmental impacts from the product offered.”

Therefore, if the appropriate externally validated or internally assessed* reduction or avoidance of harmful environmental impacts is presented then this would constitute a 'Good' score.

*if internally assessed the Authority would need to see how the reduction or avoidance was calculated to ensure this is based on appropriate, internationally accepted science based protocols; basically we're looking for equivalency to an external validation.

Q47: Products in reality are never manufactured / distributed in isolation and will be grouped together in the same manufacturing / distribution facilities and processes. If a bidder responds to a question on a site or distribution process basis, would this constitute evidence for a good to fair score?

A47: If the bidder provides the evidence that the product offered is one of the products subject to the manufacturing or distribution facilities or processes in question requested this would be acceptable.

Q48: Can you provide an example of a good score and a fair score based on the two examples concept?

A48: Yes, it is important to recognise though that we will treat each submission on its own merits, however to provide some typical examples;

- i. If a bidder presents an environmental audit from a raw material supplier evidencing that materials do not contribute to deforestation and the audit is carried out by a regulated 3rd party auditing organisation, this would constitute a 'Good' score; If however the supplier provides an audit that is not validated by a 3rd party organisation but can evidence robust evaluation has been carried out, this would most likely be a 'Fair' score.
- ii. If a bidder provides evidence that the factory that manufactures the product offered is powered by non-fossil fuel energy that would constitute a 'Fair' score. If this evidence is supported by either a calculated emissions reduction or avoidance in line with GHG protocols that would raise the example into the 'Good' score level.
- iii. If the bidder provides evidence of product design processes that show clear decisions made that either reduce or avoid assessed environmental impacts, such as reduction / non use of virgin plastics in the product; that would constitute a 'Fair' score. If this decision was accompanied by a calculated value e.g. reduction / avoidance of CO₂E this would elevate the evaluation to a 'Good' score.
- iv. On the distribution side, if the vehicle fleet which transports the product to the end customer has been decarbonised wholly or partially then this could be given a 'Fair' score. If the associated calculation was provided quantifying the reduction or avoidance of CO₂ emissions then this would be given a 'Good' score.

As per the scoring guidance a minimum of two examples must be provided.

Q49: Will there be a minimum requirement to attain within that 10% weighting?

A49: This is not our current intention.

Q50: Will the two examples be weighted equally?

A50: Yes.

Q51: Will the scoring only be applied to actions already taken by suppliers?

A51: The guidance states; " The bidder providing evidence of processes in place or actions already taken that have led or will lead (based on available evidence) to a measurable reduction of assessed harmful environmental impacts from the product offered." So, yes, actions must have already been taken.

Q52: A bidder has presented certification from a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) as validation of deforestation avoidance, is this acceptable?

A52: This would be acceptable provided the NGO in question is subject to regulatory jurisdiction in its region.

Q53: If a bidder has differing products, what would base our answer on?

A53: See Q3 & Q4

Q55: To receive full marks for the examples requires validation. Does this mean you will expect product LCAs (Life Cycle Assessments)?

A55: See Q42.

****New****

Q56: I have updated my product and /or it associated value chain which reduces its harmful environmental impact, but I've noted that this has been added to the product specification stated in the tender. Can I include this update as an example in response to this question?

A56: This should not be offered as an example as; in effect this is now part of the product requirement.

Frameworks in scope during trial period (1st December 2023 - 31st May 2024)

Framework	Category Team
NP56823 Urinary Catheters & Drainage Bags	Paramedical
NP67524 Neurological Devices and Supporting Products	Medical Surgical
NP50924 Minimally Invasive Surgical Products	Medical Surgical
NP59424 Supply of Sterile Procedure Packs and Supplementary Items	Paramedical
NP57324 Hand Hygiene Products	Estates and Facilities