

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (SEEDA)
Invitation to Tender

TENDER FOR PROJECT FINANCIAL SERVICES

Tender Name: C2C financial consultants

Tender Reference number: SEEDA/SR/MAY/2010/02

1. Background and Aim

The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) is responsible for the economic and social development of the South East – the driving force of the UK's economy. SEEDA aims to create a prosperous, dynamic and inspirational region by helping businesses compete more efficiently, training a highly skilled workforce, supporting and enabling communities, while safeguarding the natural resources and cherishing the rich cultural heritage.

Europe plays an important role in the strategy and activities of SEEDA. SEEDA participates in various EU-funded projects, among others, international projects funded from the INTERREG IVA 2 Seas programme. This tender seeks to outsource the provision of financial support and in particular the preparation of the bi-annual payment claims of an international ports and maritime related project funded by INTERREG IVA 2 Seas – the Connect to Compete (C2C) Project

One of the fundamental necessities of INTERREG projects is a sound financial management enabling the lead partner to carry out its duty of budget control and auditing to the European Commission. Due to the scale of the C2C investment projects led by SEEDA it is highly likely that the project will be chosen for closer auditing and scrutiny directly by the auditors of the European Commission. Due to the Lead Partner's legal duties and financial responsibilities in running these projects, it is absolutely essential to seek financial management consultants that:

1. Are fully conversant with European Commission funding and auditing procedure;
2. Have experience of running investment projects at transnational level;

The aim is to procure financial consultants who will service the financial needs of the C2C project over the period June 2010 – June 2012.

2. Project Background C2C

C2C is a transnational action project involving three countries (UK, Belgium and France) and 8 partners from public, private and non-profit sectors. The lead partner is the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and the time scale of the project is 60 months (July 2007 – December 2011).

C2C focuses on a number of key shipping routes in North West Europe (Dover-Calais; Zeebrugge-Thames Gateway; Ramsgate-Oostende; Portsmouth-Rotterdam/Antwerp; Boulogne –Dover/Ramsgate) which are expected to be characterized by substantial growth in freight traffic.

C2C addresses the challenge of developing a network of reliably performing and resilient logistics links, by better connecting mutually-reliant ports with the hinterlands they serve in order to achieve a seamless and sustainable distribution of freight. The C2C partnership views ports as a vital component in 'bridging' the maritime borders of the area. The project therefore aims to enhance the mutualisation of their infrastructure and to instigate a cross-border perspective of ports' development, recognising their necessary interdependencies and the economic value they have not only for their regions, but also for the entire EU transport network.

The C2C project has 8 strategic and investment partners in France, Belgium and England:

1. South East England Development Agency (SEEDA),
2. Port of Dover
3. Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Calais;
4. AG Haven Oostende
5. Portsmouth Commercial Port;
6. Port Authority Zeebrugge
7. Région Nord-Pas-de-Calais
8. Province of West-Flanders

For further information on C2C please visit the project website: www.connect2compete.eu

3. Background to Process

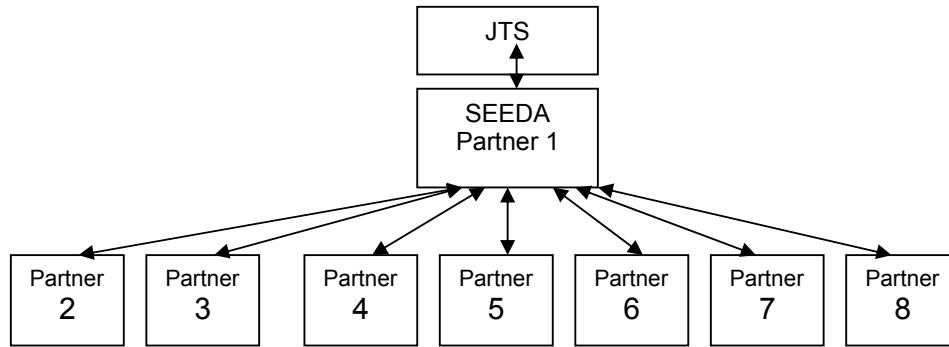
In order to apply for an instalment of ERDF funding, an audited Project Financial report (a payment claim), accompanied by Verification of Expenditure Sheets, must be submitted to the INTERREG IVA Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) by the Project Lead Partner (SEEDA). Payment Claims must be submitted twice a year on **1st March** and **1st September** throughout the lifetime of the project.

Together with the Activity Report (which is prepared by the Project Manager), Payment Claims form the basis of the monitoring and assessment of the C2C project's progress. The additional purpose of these documents is to foresee and overcome potential difficulties and delays in the implementation process. They also allow the Joint Technical Secretariat to monitor expenditure and to ensure that regular payments are made to the project via the Lead Partner.

To date SEEDA has submitted 2 payment claims, in November 2009 and in March 2010. **Four** further Payment Claims will need to be submitted in **September 2010, March 2011, September 2011** and the final claim to be submitted by **June 2012**

In order to produce the **Project Claim**, SEEDA requires each C2C partner to submit a **Partner Claim** to SEEDA. Once received, SEEDA will collate all partner claims before submitting one overall **Project Claim** to the JTS.

An **independent audit** of each Payment Claim, **both at partner and lead partner level**, has to take place before the lead Partner claim can be submitted to the JTS. SEEDA and project partners have established arrangements for this.



Following the successful approval of the claim by the JTS, SEEDA as Lead Partner will be reimbursed the total funds claimed. SEEDA then has a duty to reimburse each individual project partner in a timely manner and as agreed in the C2C Partnership Agreement.

Electronic templates of the Payment Claim Form (partner and lead partner claim) and all other supporting forms are provided by the JTS and have been successfully used in the November 2009 claim and in the March 2010 claim. In addition C2C partner training (including the provision of a payment claim manual) has been implemented.

4. Requirements

SEEDA wishes to engage consultants to progress with the implementation of the outstanding four claims and successfully complete the C2C project. This service will include:

(i) Assistance to C2C partners in the completion of partner claims

Assistance to all 8 C2C project partners will need to be provided for the completion of their individual partner payment claim forms. This includes, for each of the remaining four payment claim periods, the provision of a **payment claim briefing session** at C2C partnership meetings and the provision of **ad-hoc email & telephone assistance** during claim completion. **The implementation of an agreed timetable** for the submission of non-audited (draft) and audited (final) payment claim forms must be implemented.

(ii) Verification & quality control of partner claims

The successful completion and submission of an overall Project claim depends on the receipt of accurately completed individual project partner claims. Assistance is required to **verify and quality control** each of the 8 partner payment claims for each of the four payment claim periods prior to each partner having their claim audited by their appointed First Level Controller (FLC). **A highly pro-active/hands on approach is essential** to obtain the necessary information from partners to ensure their claims meet the specific time schedules and eligibility guidelines (costs allocated to correct budget lines and within budget limits allocated for activities etc).

(iii) Production of overall Project claim

Following submission of audited partner payment claims, the overall **Project claim must be produced** which will then be audited by SEEDA's appointed independent auditor and submitted to the JTS.

Following the submission of each project payment claim, SEEDA requires the provision of **a report summarising project expenditure** to date and also **a forecast of future partner spending** (figures are provided by each partner in their payment claim).

6. Project Management, Reporting and Timing

SEEDA is the lead partner of the C2C project. The Agency's headquarters are in Guildford, England and the core management team will also be located in Guildford. Whilst remote working is anticipated due to the transnational nature of the project, it is expected that the consultant may be required to attend project meetings in Project partners' locations. Travel arrangements and accommodation need to be arranged in such way that these costs do not overly burden the financial support budget. This resource commitment is aimed at ensuring full co-ordination and close communication within the core management team.

The working language will be English and all reporting has to be done in English.

The contract will be between the successful consultant and SEEDA as the lead partner organisation. The contract manager for the project will be the C2C Project Manager, who, along with the C2C Project Coordinator, will also be the day-to-day client contact for the consultants during the project.

Timing

| | | | |
|---|-------------------|------|------------|
| Deadline for receipt of tenders | <u>12.00 noon</u> | date | 02/06/2010 |
| Contract award | | | 09/06/2010 |
| Anticipated Formal Contract Commencement: | | | 16/06/2010 |
| Currently Programmed Formal Contract Termination: | | | 29/06/2012 |

7. Tender response

The financial support of the C2C project is very important and deals with a large number of financial issues not only in the lead partner organisation, but also in other regional and national government and agency departments and above all, in investment partner locations.

The consultants need to display familiarity and experience not only with European funding but also with the generality of funding and finance related legal issues in those states that provide partners in the project. This expertise is either available in-house, or may need to be subcontracted. A sub-contract arrangement will need to be under the lead financial consultant.

The transnational partnerships and the lead partner will insist upon named persons that will be the interface between the consultants and the client. One single responsible, senior consultant will need to be named and assigned to the contract. His or her replacement will need to be discussed with the client and the replacement approved by the client and the core executive of the project.

The Total cost of the service for all four claims must be provided in Euros. In the cost breakdown, costs should be itemised against named staff resources and identified as day rates, commensurate with the INTERREG Programme External Consultants range of fees. Costs should identify VAT separately.

Please provide one bound copy and 3 unbound copies of your tender.

The Tender must include:

1. Short profile of the company;
2. Approach to the financial support of the project;
3. Capability and Capacity Statement of the Company, with particular focus on ERDF financial administration and management expertise and INTERREG project and investment experience;
4. Proposed named consultants including their full CV's and a summary statement of their capacity and experience;
5. Completed Form of Offer
6. Detailed breakdown of costs per C2C project claim, identifying day rates, number of days per claim, number of trips per claim, number of overnight accommodation per claim, identifying "other potential" expenditure where necessary;
7. The tender should clearly differentiate between the core work periods and the additional tasks. Consultants may want to identify tasks in addition to the list provided in this tender;
8. A minimum of three references of other clients, preferably one reference at European Union, INTERREG or National Government level.

Tenderers must state if any of their proposed solution requires the use of sub-contractors. SEEDA reserves the right to reject the use of any particular sub-contractor.

8. IMPORTANT Instructions for Submission of Tenders

Please follow these instructions carefully as non-compliant tenders will not be accepted

- Your tender must be returned to the Procurement Team in a plain envelope using only the label provided, and with no means of identifying the tenderer.
- Tenders must be returned no later than the due date and time stated. (Tenders received after this time will not be accepted. If you are relying on couriers or the postal service, please send well in advance. No reasons will be accepted for missing the deadline.)
- Electronic submissions (email) will not be accepted.
- Fax submissions will only be accepted by arrangement with the Procurement Team on the morning of the due date, and must be followed by hardcopies within one working day.
- Tenders must include the signed and completed Form of Offer.

Please ensure that you have included all information requested in this specification.

This is an open tender process and the tender has not been advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union. The submissions must be quoted in EUROS (in case the consultant is based outside the EUR-area the conversion rate used for the calculation must be provided).

SEEDA retains the right to change the time schedule for the tender process if necessary. SEEDA will notify consultants of any changes to the timetable.

9. Tender Selection

SEEDA reserves the right to exclude a tender from the evaluation for any one of the following reasons:

Does not include all information requested in the **Tender Response** section above.

Does not meet budget requirements.

Does not show:

- Prior experience with the financial management of INTERREG projects, preferably investment projects;
- A sound knowledge of INTERREG regulations and preferably, the INTERREG IVA 2 Seas programme regulations and costs eligibility;
- Knowledge of finance, internal control and auditing;
- Excellent command of English
- Experience in operating in a multicultural environment;
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Tenderer cannot offer Continuity of the support of the consultant(s) proposed throughout the lifetime of the project.

10. Contract Award

SEEDA considers that this contract may be suitable for economic operators that are small or medium enterprises (SMEs). However, any selection of tenderers will be based solely on the criteria set out for the procurement.

The contract will be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender, and tenders will be evaluated on the following equally weighted criteria:

Price

Quality of tender

Understanding of the issues/requirement

Approach and methodology (a clear structure for the financial management of the project and ability to communicate highly technical issues in a concise, clear and easily understandable way)

Quality of proposed team

11. Terms and Conditions

The contract will be awarded on the basis of SEEDA's standard Terms & Conditions of contract and a copy of this can be found on the SEEDA website at: <http://www.seeda.co.uk/Procurement/>.

SEEDA reserves the right to award the contract for all or any part of a tender, or not to award the contract. SEEDA also reserves the right to award the contract to more than one supplier.

12. Freedom of Information Act 2000

Under the Government Code of Practice on Access to Government Information SEEDA must reserve the general right to disclose either information about your tender or the tender itself, including your price or range of prices, once a contract is awarded. However, you may request that certain information is not disclosed if to do so would prejudice your legitimate commercial interests.

Requests for non-disclosure must accompany your tender and include a clear and substantive justification together with a time limit when any confidential information could be disclosed – this is not normally expected to be more than 7 years. It would be helpful, if appropriate, if you could keep the areas that you consider should not be disclosed separate from the other areas of your tender.

13. Confidentiality

Due to the nature of the projects, the multitude of national, regional and local government partners as well as the involvement of the private sector in the investment projects, confidentiality is of paramount importance. Unless specifically approved by either the Lead Partner or the Core Executive, the financial consultants will not disclose any financial information to parties not involved in the INTERREG projects. The financial consultants are not expected to make any disclosures to the press, unless approved by the project director or manager of the projects.

Financial information of any nature pertaining to the SEEDA led INTERREG projects will not be shared with other INTERREG projects or other INTERREG partners unless approved by the lead partner or requested by the INTERREG Secretariat or European Commission.

14. Further information

Any requests for further information regarding this tender should be made in writing or email to:

Nancy Jardine,
South East England Development Agency
Cross Lanes
Guildford
Surrey
GU1 1YA

nancyjardine@seeda.co.uk