

**NHS England**  
**Framework Agreement for Staff Survey Services**

**Invitation to Tender: Document 3 – Statement of Requirements**

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**Prepared by NHS Business Services Authority acting on behalf of NHS England**

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## 1 NATIONAL NHS STAFF SURVEY

- 1.1 NHS England took on the responsibility for commissioning the national NHS Staff Survey from April 2013. The survey was previously owned by the Care Quality Commission and its predecessor organisations from 2003 until 2009 and by the Department of Health from 2009 to 2012.
- 1.2 The purpose of the NHS Staff Survey is to collect staff views and experiences of working in their local NHS organisation and to provide information for deriving national and local performance indicators.
- 1.3 The NHS Staff Survey provides an opportunity for organisations to survey their staff in a consistent and systematic way. This makes it possible to build up a picture of staff experience and, with care, to compare and monitor change over time and to identify variations between different staff groups. Obtaining feedback from staff, and taking account of their views and priorities, is vital for driving real service improvements in the NHS.
- 1.4 The results are primarily intended for use by NHS organisations to help them review and improve staff experience so that staff can provide better patient care. The Care Quality Commission will use the results from the survey to monitor ongoing compliance with essential standards of quality and safety. The survey will also support accountability of the Secretary of State for Health to Parliament for delivery of the NHS Constitution.
- 1.5 All NHS trusts (Foundation Trusts, acute and specialist hospital trusts, ambulance service trusts, mental health, community and learning disability trusts) are required to participate in this survey. Clinical Commissioning Groups, Commissioning Support Units, Social Enterprises and other NHS bodies may choose to undertake the NHS Staff survey on a voluntary basis. This requirement to participate may be subject to change.
- 1.6 To help develop and administer the NHS Staff Survey, NHS England has appointed an NHS Staff Survey Co-ordination Centre (Co-ordination Centre). Working with NHS England and with the independent NHS Staff Survey Advisory Group<sup>1</sup>, this Co-ordination Centre is responsible for designing the surveys, preparing guidance and co-ordinating implementation of the surveys at the local level. The Co-ordination Centre also carries out the analysis of the data and the dissemination and publication of the results.
- 1.7 Individual NHS organisations will be responsible for funding these surveys and for ensuring that they are conducted according to the national guidance and timetable. NHS organisations are required to engage the services of a Supplier to administer the NHS Staff Survey on their behalf.

## 2 THE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

- 2.1 NHS England wishes to establish Framework Agreement(s) with the successful Bidders and it is intended that the Framework Agreement(s) will be available for use by

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<sup>1</sup> The NHS Staff Survey Advisory Group, consists of representatives from NHS England, CQC, NHS Trusts, NHS Staff Survey Co-ordination Centre, NHS Leadership Academy, NHS Employers and Trade Unions, and is responsible for leading decision-making around survey design and implementation.

or on behalf of NHS organisations and other organisations providing NHS services (and their statutory successors and organisations as a result of re-organisation or organisational changes), hereafter referred to as “the Participating Authority”. The Participating Authority shall include:

- 2.1.1 a Contracting Authority entitled to place Orders under this Framework Agreement including the Authority and any other Participating Authority as set out in the Key Provisions of the Framework Agreement for the provision of Services and as listed in the OJEU contract notice 2015/S 029-049099.
- 2.1.2 The parties identified at 2.1.1 will be able to enter into contracts directly with the successful bidders. For the avoidance of doubt the Framework Agreement does not guarantee that a successful Bidder will be offered work by such parties.
- 2.2 NHS England intends to establish Framework Agreement to be implemented in England during the financial years 2015/16,.
- 2.3 Any Framework Agreement(s) resulting from this procurement exercise is expected to commence 9 June 2015 and be available for a period of four (4) years. There is no option to extend the term of the framework beyond 4 years.
- 2.4 Suppliers will be required to conduct the NHS Staff Survey within a strict and robust framework as outlined in the guidance<sup>2</sup> provided by the Co-ordination Centre.
- 2.5 Suppliers will be required to deliver the NHS Staff Survey to a high standard with minimal errors.
- 2.6 Suppliers will need to demonstrate how they will meet the requirement to deliver the services as outlined herein.
- 2.7 Failure by Suppliers to deliver the NHS Staff Survey to the required standards could result in the Participating Authority data being excluded from the survey. The Supplier would be fully liable for any such failure and neither the Participating Authority nor the Supplier would be expected to have recourse against NHS England in the case of data being excluded due to Supplier error.
- 2.8 Any failure by the Supplier to meet the requirements (including but not limited to a failure resulting in the exclusion of a Participating Authority’s data from the survey) may result in removal of the Supplier from the Framework.

### 3 OVERVIEW OF THE SURVEY PROCESS

- 3.1 The NHS Staff Survey was implemented in full for the first time in the autumn of 2003 and has been repeated every year since then. In 2014, questionnaires were sent to 624,000 NHS staff throughout England and the national response rate was 42%.
- 3.2 Each Participating Authority is responsible for ensuring that the staff survey is conducted at the specified time and using the specified methodology. To ensure confidentiality, it is obligatory for them to use an external Supplier to carry out key

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.nhsstaffsurveys.com/Caches/Files/ST14\\_Guidance%20Notes\\_FINAL\\_.pdf](http://www.nhsstaffsurveys.com/Caches/Files/ST14_Guidance%20Notes_FINAL_.pdf)

<http://www.nhsstaffsurveys.com/Page/1035/Survey-Documents/Survey-Documents/>

elements of the survey including questionnaire response receipt, response rate monitoring, data entry and transfer to the Co-ordination Centre. It will be strongly recommended that Participating Authorities use one of the Suppliers and these will be listed on the Co-ordination Centre website.

- 3.3 Participating Authorities are able to conduct a paper survey, an online survey or a mixed mode survey combining paper and online options. The Co-ordination Centre will publish eligibility criteria for Participating Authorities who wish to run the survey online or via a mixed mode. Participating Authorities must meet all the criteria to be allowed to run the online / mixed mode option and have their data included in national reporting. The Co-ordination Centre and NHS England will have the final decision on whether a Participating Authority is permitted to run the online /mixed mode option. If they do not meet all the criteria, then they will be required to run the survey using a paper-based approach.
- 3.4 The survey must include the specified 'core' questionnaire. In addition, Participating Authorities are able to select questions from optional additional question modules. Optional additional question modules can be added to the core questionnaire using the compilation tool available on the Co-ordination Centre web site.
- 3.5 Participating Authorities also have the option of including additional local questions to cover issues of particular local interest. To maintain consistency, these local questions should be of a similar style to the core and optional question modules. They should be designed on separate pages, but must be printed within the survey booklet.
- 3.6 The Co-ordination Centre will provide Participating Authorities and Suppliers with information about the standard survey material and methodologies, as well as responding to any other queries that may arise.
- 3.7 The core services that Suppliers will be expected to offer to Participating Authorities include:
  - 3.7.1 Providing practical support and advice for choosing a survey methodology in accordance with the specification set out by the Co-ordination Centre (ie census or sample, sample size, online, paper or mixed mode).
  - 3.7.2 Providing practical support and advice for selecting the sample of staff in accordance with the specification set out by the Co-ordination Centre.
  - 3.7.3 Printing questionnaires, covering letters, reminders etc. and/or;
  - 3.7.4 Setting up online surveys and dealing with technical queries.
  - 3.7.5 Advising the Participating Authority on their pre-survey communication strategy.
  - 3.7.6 Distribution of survey materials, and handling receipt of questionnaires.
  - 3.7.7 Delivering online surveys to email addresses, where appropriate and providing technical support to enable staff to respond.
  - 3.7.8 Liaising with the Participating Authority about non-responses and reminders.
  - 3.7.9 Providing support and advice to ensure good response rates.

- 3.7.10 Data entry, cleaning data and providing data to the Co-ordination Centre by the required deadline in the specified format (the Co-ordination Centre will be responsible for providing basic standard reports of survey findings to Participating Authorities).
- 3.8 It should be noted that Participating Authorities may vary in the extent to which they use Suppliers to implement the survey. While some Participating Authorities will sub-contract all the above elements of the survey, others may choose only to use Suppliers for those elements which it is mandatory to sub-contract: receipt of questionnaires, data entry and transfer of data to the Co-ordination Centre.
- 3.9 It should also be noted that some Participating Authorities may contract for services beyond these core activities, such as additional reporting and analysis of the survey data, and other consultancy services
- 3.10 (as set out in paragraph 5).
- 3.11 The Co-ordination Centre will provide the following additional assistance to Participating Authorities and Suppliers:
- 3.11.1 a set of guidance notes and a web site explaining how to conduct the survey, and how to use the results;
  - 3.11.2 a core questionnaire (note that this will NOT include the setup and programming of an online questionnaire);
  - 3.11.3 optional additional question modules which can be added to the core questionnaire (note that this will NOT include the setup and programming of an online questionnaire);
  - 3.11.4 a help-line to advise Participating Authorities and Suppliers on survey implementation;
  - 3.11.5 central collation of the core results, and production of feedback reports for each Participating Authority containing the survey findings and national comparison data;
  - 3.11.6 additional checks and support for Participating Authorities conducting the survey online.
- 3.12 The Supplier must adhere strictly to the guidance and timetable issued by the Co-ordination Centre when undertaking the NHS Staff Survey.

## **4 THE DETAILED REQUIREMENTS**

### **4.1 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1.1 The Supplier will be required to provide practical support and advice to Participating Authorities about choosing a survey methodology in accordance with the specification set out by the Co-ordination Centre (ie census or sample, sample size, online, paper or mixed mode).
- 4.1.2 The Supplier will be required to advise the Participating Authority on their pre-survey communication strategy.

## 4.2 QUESTIONNAIRES

- 4.2.1 The 'core' (compulsory) questions and optional additional question modules will be developed and piloted by the Co-ordination Centre. An illustrative description of the core questionnaire format is given below, for costing purposes. The actual questionnaires used may deviate from this description in one or more details. The specification here is based on the 2014 Staff Survey core questionnaire.
- 4.2.1.1 8 A4 sides, to be produced in stapled A3 booklet form;
  - 4.2.1.2 Questionnaire to be printed, with the use of one colour plus a 25% shade of that colour, and/or;
  - 4.2.1.3 Online version of the questionnaire to be set up in accordance with the guidance issued by the Co-ordination Centre. All selected staff should receive an identical online questionnaire;
  - 4.2.1.4 Each questionnaire to be printed, or labelled, with a unique identification number that can be used to identify both the Participating Authority and the individual;
  - 4.2.1.5 106 tick-box type questions or statements (e.g. training & development Q1 is a single question with seven multiple response options which could all be ticked, so is considered as seven questions);
  - 4.2.1.6 Four 'Other, please write in' type questions; and
  - 4.2.1.7 One open-ended comments section at end of questionnaire (no coding required, only data entry, although anything alluding to the identification of the person responding should be suppressed, including names of individuals).
- 4.2.1.8 The Supplier will be required to use the core questionnaire without deviation, as those questions will form the basis for national performance indicators, and need to be comparable between Participating Authorities and over time.
- 4.2.1.9 Where Participating Authorities choose to include additional question modules, the Supplier may need to support them in selecting appropriate modules. The compilation tool on the Co-ordination Centre website can be used to incorporate selected modules in the Participating Authority's questionnaire.
- 4.2.1.10 Where Participating Authorities choose to include local questionnaire variations, the Supplier may need to support them to design and test additional local questions, to cover issues not included in the additional question modules.

## 4.3 SAMPLING

- 4.3.1 All staff (both full-time and part-time) that are directly employed by the Participating Authority on 1 September of the year of the survey are eligible for the survey. Non-executive directors, staff on bank-only contracts, agency nurses, student nurses and staff employed by contractors where services have been contracted out, are *not* eligible for the survey. The Co-ordination Centre will provide detailed written guidance to Participating Authorities and Suppliers on how to select a random sample of staff. Suppliers will be expected to liaise closely with the Participating Authority to provide an accurate staff list from which the sample is drawn.

- 4.3.2 Participating Authorities may take a census approach to the survey and offer the survey to all their staff members. They may also undertake an extended sample. However, the minimum requirement for Participating Authorities is likely to be the same as in previous years: questionnaires are sent to a randomly selected sample of staff. The minimum sample sizes required will depend on the size of the Participating Authorities. For the 2014 survey, these were:
- 4.3.2.1 Participating Authorities with 600 or fewer employees are required to conduct a full census.
  - 4.3.2.2 Participating Authorities with between 601 and 1,000 staff are required to sample 600 employees.
  - 4.3.2.3 Participating Authorities with between 1,001 and 1,500 staff are required to sample 700 employees.
  - 4.3.2.4 Participating Authorities with between 1,501 and 2,000 staff are required to sample 750 employees.
  - 4.3.2.5 Participating Authorities with between 2,001 and 3,000 staff are required to sample 800 employees.
  - 4.3.2.6 Participating Authorities with over 3,000 staff are required to sample 850 employees.
- 4.3.3 Whatever size of survey an Participating Authority undertakes, all the data will be transferred to the Co-ordination Centre, for inclusion in the national data set – provided that they have followed the specific rules outlined in the guidance for all of the data being submitted.

#### **4.4 PRINTING AND/OR ONLINE, DISTRIBUTION AND RECEIPT OF QUESTIONNAIRES**

- 4.4.1 NHS England shall make available through the Co-ordination Centre written guidance to the Supplier about the required distribution procedures. The procedures are likely to involve the following steps (and bidders should use this approach in making their cost estimates):
- 4.4.1.1 Online survey setup, delivery, eligibility checks and technical support (where appropriate);
  - 4.4.1.2 Pre-survey communication / publicity about the survey within the Participating Authority (precise details to be agreed with the Participating Authority);
  - 4.4.1.3 A questionnaire and covering letter (single page A4), or an online version of these documents, to be distributed to each member of staff selected in the sample. Each questionnaire should be marked with a unique identification code, in order to monitor response and target reminders;
  - 4.4.1.4 Completed paper questionnaires to be returned directly to the Supplier in a pre-printed, reply-paid first class envelope (A4 size). Suppliers should identify whether it would be feasible to use second class postage and identify the associated cost saving achievable;

- 4.4.1.5 A reminder post card (enclosed in an envelope) to be distributed three weeks after the initial mailing to all non-respondents;
  - 4.4.1.6 A second reminder letter (NHS headed single A4 page), with an additional copy of the questionnaire and a pre-paid return envelope, distributed a further 3 weeks after the first reminder letter, to all remaining non-respondents. If required, the Supplier shall provide boxes for the bulk transfer of any survey documents to the Participating Authority;
  - 4.4.1.7 Any courier costs for transfer of survey documents shall be payable by the Supplier;
  - 4.4.1.8 Online survey reminders will be conducted by email. These emails are expected to mirror the standard paper mailing times. However additional reminders to staff may be sent at the discretion of the Co-ordination Centre.
- 4.4.2 The text for the covering letter and reminders will be prepared by the Co-ordination Centre, although there will be some scope to insert additional local text. All letters should be printed on paper headed with NHS England's logo, and it is strongly recommended that the Participating Authority's logos are also added to these letters.
- 4.4.3 For online, NHS England's logo should also be included on the covering email and reminders and it is strongly recommended that the Participating Authority's logos are also added to these emails.
- 4.4.4 It is a requirement that all paper used in the publication of the NHS Staff Surveys, including questionnaires and corresponding letters, must conform to government requirements for the use of 100% recycled paper with a minimum post-consumer waste content of 80%. It is further recommended that the paper used is uncoated and of standard A4 size.
- 4.4.5 Where contracted to do so, the Supplier will be responsible for packing up the survey materials, ready for internal distribution by the Participating Authorities.
- 4.4.6 Although internal distribution will be the default option, Participating Authorities will also have the option of using home addresses for staff who do not have a permanent work address.
- 4.4.7 Participating Authorities will also have the option of using home email addresses for staff who are known not to be using a work email address (for example staff on maternity or paternity leave).
- 4.4.8 The Supplier shall report to their Participating Authority giving response rates at each stage of the mail-out, and shall provide weekly response rate updates to the Co-ordination Centre.
- 4.4.9 The Supplier will also be required to record the date of receipt of each completed questionnaire against its ID number.

#### **4.5 DATA ENTRY, CLEANING AND TRANSFER**

- 4.5.1 The Supplier shall put in place stringent quality controls for data entry and checking.
- 4.5.2 The Supplier shall be responsible for some data cleaning – for example, where there

has been an incorrect multiple response to questions - and submitting the dataset to the Co-ordination Centre in the specified format.

- 4.5.3 In addition, the Supplier shall send a separate anonymised copy of the sample file in specified format, detailing for each staff member whether or not a completed questionnaire was received, the date of receipt, and, where possible, department or directorate.

## 5 ADDITIONAL SERVICES

### ANALYSIS AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- 5.1 The Participating Authority may require further customised analysis and reports to suit their own purposes over and above those provided by the Co-ordination Centre (which is responsible for analysing the Core Questionnaire results provided by each Participating Authority and will provide Participating Authorities with a standard report together with benchmarking information from the full national sample).
- 5.2 In the event that the Participating Authority has a requirement for additional analysis and reporting (for example, because they included additional question modules or local questions) the Supplier shall enter into discussions directly with the Participating Authority for the services to be delivered and costed.
- 5.3 In the event that the Participating Authority has a requirement for additional advice on how to use the survey results to implement organisational change, the Supplier shall enter into discussions directly with the Participating Authority for the services to be delivered and costed.

## 6 ANNUAL SURVEY TIMETABLE

- 6.1 The timetable for the 2014 NHS Staff survey is shown below. Please note that the timetable is subject to change and should be regarded as illustrative only.

Survey guidance issued to all Participating Authorities	mid August
Distribution of questionnaires and reminders	Distribution – late September 1 <sup>st</sup> reminder – mid/late October 2 <sup>nd</sup> reminder – mid November (fieldwork ends in December)
Data entry, cleaning & transfer to Co-ordination Centre	December
Standard reports to Participating Authorities	mid February (early view to Participating Authorities)
National report published	end February (by NHS England and the Co-ordination Centre)

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