



## INSTRUCTIONS TO TENDERERS

### Audit services UfM Grant Schemes – Forwarding of Funds 2025-2027 - 09 - PRO559LAD-2024

When submitting their tenders, tenderers must follow all instructions, forms, terms of reference, contract provisions and specifications contained in this tender dossier. Failure to submit a tender containing all the required information and documentation within the deadline specified may lead to the rejection of the tender.

These instructions set out the rules for submitting and selecting tenders. They apply to this call for tenders, in conformity with the practical guide version 2021.1, (available on the internet at this address: <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG>).

#### 1. Services to be provided

The services required by the contracting authority are described in the terms of reference. They are set out in Annex II to the draft contract, which forms Part B of this tender dossier.

#### 2. Timetable

	DATE	TIME*
Site visit (if any)	Not applicable	Not applicable
Information meeting (if any)	Not applicable	Not applicable
Deadline for requesting clarification from the contracting authority	Date 21 days before deadline for tenders	13:00
Last date for the contracting authority to issue clarification	Date 8 days before deadline for tenders	-
Deadline for submitting tenders	20/02/2025	13:00
Interviews (if any)	Not applicable	-
Completion date for evaluating technical offers	27/02/2025**	-
Notification of award	28/02/2025**	-
Contract signature	March 2025**	-
Start date	March 2025**	-

\*All times are in the time zone of the country of the contracting authority (Barcelona local time)

\*\*Provisional date

#### 3. Participation, experts, and subcontracting

a) Participation in this tender procedure is open on equal terms to natural and legal persons (participating either individually or in a grouping (consortium) of tenderers), which are established in one of the Member States of the Union for the Mediterranean or in a country or territory authorised



by the EC Partnership Agreement under which the contract is financed . Participation is also open to international organisations. The participation of an ineligible natural or legal person will result in the automatic exclusion of that person. In particular, if that ineligible person belongs to a consortium, the whole consortium will be excluded.

b) Natural or legal persons are not entitled to participate in this tender procedure or be awarded a contract if they are in any of the situations mentioned in Sections 2.4. (EU restrictive measures), 2.6.10.1.1 (exclusion criteria) or 2.6.10.1.2. (rejection from a procedure) of the **practical guide**. Should they be in one of these situations, their tender will be considered either unsuitable or irregular.

c) In the cases listed in Section 2.6.10.1.1. of the **practical guide** tenderers may be excluded from EU financed procedures and be subject to financial penalties up to 10% of the total value of the contract in accordance with the Financial Regulation in force. This information may be published on the Commission website in accordance with the Financial Regulation in force.

d) It is recommended that the contract between the tenderer/contractor and its experts, if any, or the third party making available the experts, shall contain a dispute resolution clause.

e) The tenderer and, where applicable, entities on whose capacities the tenderer has relied with regard to criteria relating to the economic and financial capacity, shall be jointly liable for the performance of the contract. If the tenderer intends to subcontract one or more parts of the contracted services, this must be clearly stated in the organisation and methodology and in the tender submission form.

Even if subcontracting is allowed, the tenderer must intend to provide the majority of the services itself except for the tasks entrusted to experts either as natural persons or single-member companies.

f) All subcontractors as well as all entities, upon whose capacity the tenderer relies for the selection criteria must be eligible for the contract. If the identity of the intended subcontractor is already known at the time of submitting the tender, the tenderer must furnish a statement guaranteeing the eligibility of the subcontractor. If any subcontractor/capacity-providing entity identified in this way does not meet the eligibility criteria, the tender shall be rejected. If the identity of the subcontractor is not known at the time of submitting the tender, any subcontract must be awarded according to Article 4 of the general conditions of the contract.

g) Subcontractors and capacity providing entities cannot be in any of the exclusion situations listed in Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide. The successful tenderer/contractor shall submit a declaration from the intended subcontractor/capacity- providing entity that it is not in one of the exclusion situations. In the event of doubt, the contracting authority shall request documentary evidence that the subcontractor/capacity- providing entity is not in a situation of exclusion.

h) For the avoidance of doubt, where the experts are not directly employed or contracted by the tenderer/contractor but through a third party, the latter is a sub-contractor.

Experts made available by any third party (sub-contractors) are considered for all purposes related to the present contract to be the personnel of the contractor.

#### **4. Content of tenders**

Offers, all correspondence and documents related to the tender exchanged by the tenderer and the contracting authority must be written in English.



Supporting documents and printed literature furnished by the tenderer may be in another official language, provided they are accompanied by a translation into the language of the procedure. For the purposes of interpreting the tender, the language of the procedure has precedence.

The tender must include a technical offer and a financial offer, which must be submitted in separate e-mails (see clause 8).

Failure to fulfil the requirements in clauses 4.1, 4.2 and 8 will constitute an irregularity and may result in rejection of the tender.

#### 4.1. Technical offer

The Technical offer consists of the documents listed below.

The documents listed in point 1 to point 2 must be submitted within the deadline for submitting tenders.

The documentary evidence listed in point 3 below should not be submitted within the deadline for submitting tenders. Instead, they should be prepared by tenderers and kept available for the contracting authority. At any time during the procurement procedure the contracting authority may request the documentary evidence. When requested, the tenderer should provide the documentary evidence within a short deadline. In any case, the tenderer proposed by the evaluation committee for the award of the contract, will be requested to provide documentary evidence listed in point 3 listed below prior to the award of the contract.

**(1) Tender submission form** (see Part D of this tender dossier) including:

**a)** A signed **declaration** using the format attached to the tender submission form.

**b) To be kept by the tenderer and to be provided upon request:** A completed **financial identification form** (see Annex V to the draft contract) to indicate the bank account into which payments should be made if the tender is successful.

**c)** The **legal entity file** and supporting documents (see Annex V). Subcontractors are only obliged to provide the legal entity file, without the evidence.

**d) Duly authorised signature:** an official document (statutes, power of attorney, notary statement, etc.) proving that the person who signs on behalf of the company is duly authorised to do so.

**(2) Organisation and methodology** (will become Annex III to the contract), to be drawn up by the tenderer using the format in Annex III to the draft contract.

Tenderers are required to indicate, in their 'Organisation and Methodology', the name and address of the proposed auditor or audit firm that will be in charge of producing the expenditure verification report(s).



Staff are instrumental to achieve the contract objectives. CVs of the team of staff/management team are not to be included as part of the organisation and methodology or anywhere in the tender. The tenderer must describe the team of staff/management team they envisage and give generic profiles for each member (e.g., position X will be filled by someone with 5 years' experience in X sector, has X level English etc), see Annex III: Organisation & Methodology. All profiles must satisfy the minimum requirements for team of staff/management team members set out in the Terms of Reference or the tender will not be technically compliant and may be rejected. Tenderers may also assign qualifications/skills/experience collectively to the team of staff/management team in their organisation and methodology. These will serve as minimum requirements for each of team of staff/management team member and the team as a whole and the tenderer, if successful, will ensure that an individual matching those requirements is fulfilling the role in the team of staff/management team, as they will be contractually bound to do so. The identity of the individual should not be revealed in the tender for the contract, but will only be requested later in case the tenderer is successful.

**(3) To be kept by the tenderer and to be provided upon request (see introductory paragraph under 4.1):** documentary evidence of the financial and economic capacity as well as the technical and professional capacity according to the selection criteria specified in the contract notice (see also Section 2.6.11 of the practical guide).

Where the documentary evidence submitted is in an official language of the European Union other than the one of the procedure, it is strongly recommended to provide a translation into the language of the procedure, in order to facilitate the evaluation of the documents. The originals must be available to send to the contracting authority upon request.

Tenderers are reminded that the provision of false information in this tender procedure may lead to the rejection of their tender and to their exclusion from EU-funded procedures and contracts.

#### 4.2. Financial offer

The financial offer must be presented as an amount in Euro and must be submitted using the template for the global price version of Annex IV to part B of this tender dossier.

Tenderers are reminded that the maximum budget available for this contract, as stated in the contract notice, is **EUR 207,000.00** (VAT not included). Payments under this contract will be made in the currency of the tender.

#### Incidental expenditure

The estimated budget for incidental expenditure is to be pre-filled in the template budget breakdown in the tender dossier.

Incidental expenditure incurred by the contractor and, if applicable, approved by the contracting authority shall be reimbursed in full.



The financial offer must be included in a separate email.

## **5. Variant solutions**

Tenderers are not authorised to tender for a variant in addition to this tender.

## **6. Period during which tenders are binding**

Tenderers are bound by their tenders for 90 days after the deadline for submitting tenders or until they have been notified of non-award. In exceptional cases, before the period of validity expires, the contracting authority may ask tenderers to extend the period for a specific number of days, which may not exceed 40.

The selected tenderer must maintain its tender for a further 60 days. This 60-day period is added to the validity period irrespective of the date of notification. This period can be further extended when the contracting authority is required to obtain the recommendation of the panel referred to in Section 2.6.10.1.1 of the practical guide, up to the adoption of that recommendation.

## **7. Additional information before the deadline for submitting tenders**

Tenderers may submit questions in writing to the following address up to 21 days before the deadline for submission of tenders, specifying the publication reference and the contract title: [procurement@ufmsecretariat.org](mailto:procurement@ufmsecretariat.org)

The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarification on questions received after this date.

Any tenderer seeking to arrange individual meetings with the contracting authority and/or the government of the partner country and/or the European Commission concerning this contract during the tender period may be excluded from the tender procedure.

Clarifications will be published on the website <https://ufmsecretariat.org/work-with-us/procurement/> at the latest 8 days before the deadline for submitting tenders.

No site visit is planned.

No information meeting is planned.

## **8. Submission of tenders**

Tenders must be submitted exclusively via electronic submission to the following address: [procurement@ufmsecretariat.org](mailto:procurement@ufmsecretariat.org). Tenders submitted in any other way (e.g., e-mail or by letter) will be disregarded.

The time limit for receipt of tenders is on **the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2025 at 13:00 hours (Barcelona time)**. They must include the requested documents in clause 4 above.

A tender received after the time-limit for receipt of tenders will be rejected.



Tenderers must ensure that their submitted tenders contain all the information and documents required by the contracting authority at the time of submission as set out in the procurement documents.

Tenders must be submitted using the double email system, i.e., one bearing the words '**E-mail A — Technical offer - 09 - PRO559LAD-2024**' and the other '**E-mail B — Financial offer - 09 - PRO559LAD-2024**'. All parts of the tender other than the financial offer must be submitted in E-mail A (i.e., including the tender submission form and declarations).

In addition, a 3rd e-mail with the passwords of the folders sent in e-mails called "E-mail A — Technical offer" and "E-mail B — Financial offer" is required, i.e., bearing the words "**E-mail C – passwords - 09 - PRO559LAD-2024**").

Files shall be included in protected folders or at least in compressed folder(s) or through protected IT hyperlinks to file hosting service. Where passwords, encryptions or any other IT means used to protect the confidentiality of the submitted offers, decryption key or equivalent shall be sent by the tenderer.

**Any infringement of these rules (e.g., references to price in the technical offer) constitutes an irregularity which will lead to rejection of the tender.**

The technical offer must include an index of its contents.

#### **9. Amending or withdrawing tenders**

Tenderers may amend or withdraw their tenders by written notification prior to the deadline for submitting tenders. Tenders may not be amended after this deadline.

Any such notification of amendment or withdrawal must be prepared and submitted in accordance with clause 8. The e-mail must be named 'Amendment' or 'Withdrawal' as appropriate.

#### **10. Costs for preparing tenders**

No costs incurred by the tenderer in preparing and submitting the tender are reimbursable. All such costs must be borne by the tenderer, including the cost of interviewing proposed experts.

#### **11. Ownership of tenders**

The contracting authority retains ownership of all tenders received under this tendering procedure.

#### **12. Evaluation of tenders**

The opening of the received tenders is not public.

Once the contracting authority has opened the tenders, they shall become its property and will be treated confidentially.



#### 12.1. Evaluation of technical offers

The quality of each technical offer will be evaluated in accordance with the award criteria and the weighting detailed in the evaluation grid in Part C of this tender dossier. No other award criteria will be used. The award criteria will be examined in accordance with the requirements indicated in the terms of reference.

#### **NB. ANY FINANCIAL DETAIL IN THE EMAIL A OF TECHNICAL OFFER MAY LEAD TO EXCLUSION OF THE CONCERNED TENDERER.**

The evaluation of the technical offers will follow the procedures set out in Section 3.4.10.3 of the practical guide (available on the internet at: <https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/document.do?nodeNumber=3.4.10.3>).

##### 12.1.1 Interviews

The Evaluation Committee will not conduct interviews for this procedure.

**Once the evaluation committee has established each technical offer's average score** (the mathematical average of the final scores awarded by each voting member), any tender falling short of the 75-point threshold is automatically rejected. If no tender achieves 75 points or more, the tender procedure will be cancelled. Out of the tenders reaching the 75-point threshold, the best technical offer is awarded 100 points. The others receive points calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Technical score} = (\text{final score of the technical offer in question} / \text{final score of the best technical offer}) \times 100.$$

As a consequence of this formula, the best offer is always awarded 100 points.

#### 12.2. Evaluation of financial offers

Upon completion of the technical evaluation, the financial offers of tenders that were not eliminated during the technical evaluation will be opened (i.e., those with an average score of 75 points or more). Tenders exceeding the maximum budget available for the contract will not be accepted and will therefore not be further evaluated.

The provision for incidental expenditure and the provision for expenditure: verification stated in the terms of reference and to be included in the budget breakdown will not be taken into account in the comparison of the financial offers.

Any arithmetical errors are corrected without penalty to the tenderer such that, if there is a discrepancy between a unit price and the total amount derived from multiplying the unit price by the corresponding quantity, the unit price as quoted must prevail, unless the opinion of the evaluation committee is that there is an obvious error in the unit price, in which event the total amount as quoted must prevail and the unit price must be corrected.



The tender with the lowest price receives 100 points. The others are awarded points by means of the following formula:

$$\text{Financial score} = (\text{lowest price} / \text{price of the tender being considered}) \times 100.$$

For the purposes of the evaluation, a price for a service, which is 25% lower than the average price of all the submitted tenders, will be considered abnormally low. A tender with abnormally low prices shall be subject to a request for clarifications from the tenderer in order to determine the way through which the tenderer has arrived to this price and whether this fulfils the contracting authority's requirements.

#### 12.3. Choice of selected tenderer

The best price-quality ratio is established by weighting technical quality against price on an 80/20 basis.

#### 12.4. Confidentiality

The entire evaluation procedure is confidential, subject to the contracting authority's legislation on access to documents. The evaluation committee's decisions are collective and its deliberations are held in closed session. The members of the evaluation committee are bound to secrecy. The evaluation reports and written records are for official use only and may be communicated neither to the tenderers nor to any party other than the contracting authority, the European Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office, the European Public Prosecutor's Office and the European Court of Auditors.

### 13. Ethics clauses and code of conduct

#### a) Absence of conflict of interest

The tenderer must not be affected by any conflict of interest and must have no equivalent relation in that respect with other tenderers or parties involved in the project (see section III.5 Conflict of interest of the 'UfM Code of Conduct'). Any attempt by a tenderer to obtain confidential information, enter into unlawful agreements with competitors or influence the evaluation committee or the contracting authority during the process of examining, clarifying, evaluating, and comparing tenders will lead to the rejection of its tender and may result in administrative penalties according to the Financial Regulation in force.

#### b) Respect for human rights as well as environmental legislation and core labour standards

The tenderer and its personnel must comply with human rights and applicable data protection rules. In particular and in accordance with the applicable basic act, tenderers and applicants who have been awarded contracts must comply with the environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, and with the core labour standards as applicable and as defined in the relevant International Labour Organisation conventions (such as the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labour).





Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment:

The UfM Secretariat applies a policy of 'zero tolerance' in relation to all wrongful conduct which has an impact on the professional credibility of the tenderer.

Physical abuse or punishment, or threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment, and verbal abuse, as well as other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.

c) Anti-corruption and anti-bribery

The tenderer shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The 'UfM Anti-fraud Policy & Anti-Corruption Policy' sets forth the policy of the UfM in preventing and combating fraud and corruption in UfM Secretariat activities. The UfM Secretariat reserves the right to suspend or cancel project financing if corrupt practices of any kind are discovered at any stage of the award process or during the execution of a contract and if the contracting authority fails to take all appropriate measures to remedy the situation. For the purposes of this provision, 'corrupt practices' are the offer of a bribe, gift, gratuity, or commission to any person as an inducement or reward for performing or refraining from any act relating to the award of a contract or execution of a contract already concluded with the contracting authority.

d) Unusual commercial expenses

Tenders will be rejected or contracts terminated if it emerges that the award or execution of a contract has given rise to unusual commercial expenses. Such unusual commercial expenses are commissions not mentioned in the main contract or not stemming from a properly concluded contract referring to the main contract, commissions not paid in return for any actual and legitimate service, commissions remitted to a tax haven, commissions paid to a payee who is not clearly identified or commissions paid to a company which has every appearance of being a front company.

Contractors found to have paid unusual commercial expenses on projects funded by the European Union are liable, depending on the seriousness of the facts observed, to have their contracts terminated or to be permanently excluded from receiving EU funds.

e) Breach of obligations, irregularities, or fraud

The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel the procedure, where the award procedure proves to have been subject to breach of obligations, irregularities, or fraud. If breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud are discovered after the award of the contract, the contracting authority may refrain from concluding the contract.

The electronic version of documents 'UfM Code of Conduct' and the 'Anti-fraud Policy & Anti-Corruption Policy' can be found on the website: <https://ufmsecretariat.org/work-with-us/procurement/>.

## **14. Signature of contract(s)**

### **14.1. Notification of award**

Tenderers will be notified of the outcome of this procurement procedure by e-mail. The notification will be sent to the e-mail address provided in the tender submission form for the tenderer under the



section Contact Info. The same e-mail address will be used by the contracting authority for all other communications with the tenderer. It is the tenderer's responsibility to provide a valid e-mail address and to check it regularly.

#### 14.2. Signature of the contract(s).

Within 15 days of receipt of the contract already signed by the contracting authority, the selected tenderer shall sign and date the contract and return it to the contracting authority.

Failure of the selected tenderer to comply with this requirement may constitute grounds for annulling the decision to award the contract. In this event, the contracting authority may award the tender to another tenderer or cancel the tender procedure.

The other tenderers will, at the same time as the notification of award is submitted, be informed that their tenders were not retained, by electronic means or standard letter, including an indication of the relative weaknesses of their tender by way of a comparative table of the scores for the winning tender and the unsuccessful tender. The second-best tenderer is informed of the notification of award to the successful tenderer with the reservation of the possibility to receive a notification of award in case of inability to sign the contract with the first ranked tenderer. The second tenderer may refuse the award of the contract if, when receiving a notification of award, the 90 days of validity of their tender has expired.

The contracting authority will furthermore, at the same time, also inform the remaining unsuccessful tenderers of the outcome of the procurement procedure and, as a consequence of these letters the validity of their offers shall not be retained.

The corresponding contract award notice will be published on the UfM website: <https://ufmsecretariat.org/work-with-us/procurement/>

### 15. Cancellation of the tender procedure

In the event of cancellation of the tender procedure, the contracting authority will notify tenderers of the cancellation. If the tender procedure is cancelled before the e-mail of any tender has been opened, the unopened e-mails will be deleted.

Cancellation may occur, for example, where:

- the tender procedure has been unsuccessful, i.e., no suitable, qualitatively, or financially acceptable tender has been received or there is no valid response at all
- there are fundamental changes to the economic or technical data of the project
- exceptional circumstances or force majeure render normal performance of the contract impossible
- all technically acceptable tenders exceed the financial resources available
- there have been breach of obligations, irregularities, or frauds in the procedure, in particular if they have prevented fair competition
- the award is not in compliance with sound financial management, i.e., does not respect the principles of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness (e.g., the price proposed by the tenderer to



whom the contract is to be awarded is objectively disproportionate with regard to the price of the market).

**In no event shall the contracting authority be liable for any damages whatsoever including, without limitation, damages for loss of profits, in any way connected with the cancellation of a tender procedure even if the contracting authority has been advised of the possibility of damages. The publication of a contract notice does not commit the contracting authority to implement the programme or project announced.**

#### **16. Appeals**

Tenderers believing that they have been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may file a complaint. The contracting authority must reply within 30 days of receipt of the complaint. This is without prejudice to the arbitration proceedings and, in particular, without altering the time-limits for bringing actions set out below, which could be undertaken by such tenderers. Therefore, tenderers believing that they have been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process shall be referred for arbitration to the Tribunal Arbitral de Barcelona (TAB) [Barcelona Arbitration Court], of the Associació Catalana per a l'Arbitratge [Catalan Arbitration Association] - by whatever name it may be known in the future –, which is entrusted with the appointment of the arbitrator or arbitrators and the administration of the arbitration in accordance with its Regulations in force at the start of the arbitration.

The measures provided for in this section shall be instituted within two months of the publication of the measure, or of its notification to the plaintiff, or, in the absence thereof, of the day on which it came to the knowledge of the latter, as the case may be.