



The Association of British Professional Conference Organisers

Guidance on tendering for conference & exhibition support services

A number of steps should be followed by the client or host organisation to ensure best return on time for yourself and for the PCO. ABPCO believes this can be best achieved through the process outlined below.

1. Developing a Briefing Document

- The client or host organisation should develop an outline briefing document to include statistics of previous years' conferences (up to five years) including the following:
 - venues used
 - conference and exhibition space requirements ie layout, capacity, size
 - catering requirements
 - number and description of delegate types, exhibitors
 - number of speakers
 - content of technical programme (e.g. number of sessions, number of abstracts expected)
 - details of social programme
 - accommodation requirements (amount and type needed)
 - security considerations
 - marketing and publicity sources
 - financial objectives.

- The briefing should include information on individuals from the client/host organisation who will be involved in directing the event.

2. Outline the type of PCO whom the client/host organisation feels would be appropriate

- Consider size, experience, client base, similar events organised, reputation
- Obtain competency statements from a shortlist of six PCOs.

3. Contact shortlisted PCOs

- Contact by telephone up to four PCOs who, on paper, meet the criteria in terms of experience and size based on your research and on the competency statements received.

The telephone conversation should be exploratory and aim to clarify and refine the objectives of the project which can be incorporated into the 'Tender Document' (briefing document)

Inform the four selected PCOs of the criteria to be used in judging and assessing their proposals when received.

4. Send out the 'Invitation to Tender' (briefing document)

- Send to a maximum of four PCOs
- Allow up to 21 days for the PCOs to respond with a proposal which is likely to include:
 - clarification of the role of the PCO
 - tailored capability statement
 - testimonials from satisfied clients
 - environmental statement
 - quality statement
 - clear outline of fee structure (but not detailed budget proposals)
 - copyright statement
 - other relevant information sought for making the selection.

5. Select no more than three PCO companies for interview

- Allocate time at the interview for presentation and a detailed question and answer session.

Your selection of the PCO should be confirmed at this stage. However, should a selection not be made from the two or three presenting PCOs, the selection committee should consider interviewing the other one/two PCOs not initially invited for interview.

6. The unsuccessful PCO(s)

The selection committee should provide feedback to the unsuccessful companies. This will allow the PCO to identify those aspects of their service that were in accordance with the needs of the client/host organisation, and the weaknesses associated with their services on this occasion.