



**Dynamic Purchasing System for
Training Services for Tech Northwest
Skillnet, on behalf of Atlantic
Technological University
Stage 1 Pre-Qualification Questionnaire

DPS Information Document**

INVITATION FOR DYNAMIC PURCHASING SYSTEM FOR TRAINING SERVICES FOR TECH NORTHWEST SKILLNET ON BEHALF OF ATLANTIC TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

Contracting Authority:	Tech Northwest Skillnet on behalf of Atlantic Technological University.
Establishment of DPS for:	Tech Northwest Skillnet on behalf of Atlantic Technological University wishes to establish a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for Training Services.
Procedure:	Dynamic Purchasing System – Pre-Qualification
Duration of DPS:	The DPS will be established for two (2) years. The DPS is open for applications until 12 Noon on 31st December 2025 as a minimum. It may then be extended to 31 st December 2028, subject to funding.
eTenders Resource ID:	2776807
Issue Date:	29 November 2023
Contact for Queries:	Messaging facility on www.etenders.gov.ie
Please note that information relating to this Application, including clarifications and changes, will be published on the Irish Government Procurement Opportunities Portal Registration is free of charge and there is no charge for documents. Please note that the Contracting Authority cannot accept responsibility for information relayed (or not relayed) via third parties.	

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1 Disclaimer

This document issued herewith (“the Document”) is for information only and does not constitute, and shall not be interpreted as, an offer for sale, prospectus, or the basis of a contract.

Applicants are recommended to read the documents thoroughly. While all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that the information set out in the Document is accurate and up to date, no representation or warranty, express or implied, is or will be made or given in relation to the accuracy or the completeness of any information contained in the Document or otherwise provided by or on behalf of the Contracting Authority (in writing or otherwise) to any interested party or its advisers. No responsibility or liability for any loss or damage arising as a result of reliance on these documents, or for the information contained in these documents or for any omission is or will be accepted by the Contracting Authority or by any of its officers, employees, agents or professional advisers. No officer, employee, agent, or professional adviser of the company has any authority to give or make any representation or warranty, express or implied, in relation to such information. The Contracting Authority’s officers, employees, agents and professional advisers expressly disclaim any and all liability arising out of such documentation or information and any errors or omissions in or from the documents and information.

The Contracting Authority reserves the right to discontinue the procurement process at any time.

2 About the Contracting Authority

Tech Northwest Skillnet was formed in 2011 by Atlantic Technological University Donegal, formerly LYIT, in response to a number of SMEs in the Northwest with training requirements that were not being met. The companies also wanted opportunities to network with other businesses and organise training collectively in the Northwest for their own staff. Tech Northwest Skillnet was formed to fill the skills gap enabling the member companies to gain competitive advantage by growing their skills set and networking with other like-minded individuals who are all at similar stages of development. From inception in April 2011 the network has grown steadily and consistently in line with expectations and plans. It has consistently outperformed all targets in each year.

A critical and central barrier reported by the TNW’s network members is that access to the levels of professional expertise that is required by its members is not readily accessible in the Northwest region. Access to these experts often requires travel time, days out of the office and costs incurred in accessing this. As a result of TNW Skillnet, these companies now do not have to look to Dublin, Belfast or the UK. The network facilitates the access for training in the Northwest region making it a valuable return on investment for the member companies and removes location barriers for

training. In recent years TNW Skillnet has developed its ability to deliver training online using a variety of platforms/packages. It is expected that in 2022 training will be a mixture of face to face and online delivery.

In summary all training/networking events are delivered regionally to technology focussed companies and with training focused on owner/managers and key personnel. This allows management to commit themselves and staff to attending and actively participating in training more often than ever before.

The main objectives of the TNW Skillnet network are:

- To develop a sustainable network of companies
- To identify and deliver training solutions in response to the requirements of our members
- To provide best in class training
- To facilitate networking for sustainability
- To Up skill and Cross Skill employees to help companies meet their business goals
- To help companies to retain key staff through the provision of quality training
- To subsidise the cost of training for members

Tech Northwest Skillnet has recently carried out a detailed Training Needs Analysis with the current member companies and identified a range of training and development needs that fall under the following categories:

- IT/Programming Skills
- Management, Project Management and Communication Skills
- Employment Activation/Skills Connect Programmes
- Specialist Manufacturing Skills

Accordingly, Tech Northwest Skillnet is seeking to establish a Dynamic Purchasing System of service providers from which organisations will be selected to participate in mini competitions for contract award for delivery of various training programmes to TNW Skillnet and its member companies, once specific needs arise.

Tech Northwest Skillnet on behalf of Atlantic Technological University (hereinafter referred to as the “Contracting Authority”) is the authority responsible for this procurement.

Atlantic Technological University (ATU) is one of the largest multi-campus universities on the island, serving a diverse group of learners, staff, communities and organisations from our region and further afield. The University was established in April 2022, the result of a merger between three institutes of technology, GMIT, LYIT and IT Sligo. It accommodates more than 20,000 students supported by 2,200 staff. ATU will offer almost 600 academic programmes from pre-degree to doctoral level.

As a northern and western multi-campus technological university, we are dedicated to enabling sustainable economic, social and cultural development; connected to our region and with a mindset that reaches far beyond it. On this occasion the ATU is acting as the Contracting Authority on behalf of Tech Northwest Skillnet. Tech Northwest Skillnet is funded by member companies and the Training Networks Programme, an initiative of Skillnet Ireland Ltd funded from the National Training Fund through the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

Further information is available at the Tech Northwest Skillnet and Atlantic Technological University websites www.technorthwestskillnet.com and www.atu.ie

It is the policy of the Contracting Authority to encourage participation by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in this competition. SMEs are encouraged to explore the possibilities of forming relationships with other SMEs or with larger enterprises to meet the financial, economic or technical capacity requirements of the competition, if required.

3 Scope of Requirements

3.1 General Requirements

Tech Northwest Skillnet on behalf of Atlantic Technological University wishes to establish a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) under eight (8) lots for Training Services. The focus is on Training for ICT and Technology Companies (LOT 1) but will also cover General Business Training under Lots 2-8. Examples of some of the training courses that are planned for 2024 include SQL, Leadership, Angular, Project Management, Dignity and Respect in the Workplace, Cyber Security and Skills Connect Programmes. Some of these are accredited programmes while others will focus on key skills applicable to the workplace. Most of the training will take place in person in Donegal, Sligo or Leitrim. On occasion there will be a request for an online course to be delivered. Most programmes are delivered for groups of 10-15 people. These may be employees from some of the large Fintech/ICT employers in the region. They may also be made up of Owners/Managers of SMEs in the region. In general, the training provider will be asked to provide a Tutor, Venue with relevant facilities, Course Material, Refreshments and Accreditation in some circumstances. The exact requirements for each course will be listed in a Request for Quotation document on e-tenders to all qualified applicants.

The DPS will be in place for a minimum of 2 years with an approximate spend of €1.0m and will be the main procurement route for the Atlantic Technological University Tech Northwest Skillnet Training Services.

The DPS is open for applications until 31st December 2025 as a minimum, however it will become operational with effect from 1st January 2024. It may be extended to 31st December 2028, subject to funding.

Lot Descriptions:

Lot No.	Description
1	ICT and Technology Training
2	Financial, Law, Tax, Cyber Security, Governance, Software and Systems Training
3	Leadership, Communication, Marketing and Management Training
4	Project Management and Report Writing Training
5	Health and Safety Training
6	Employability Training including modules in Coaching and Hospitality Skills
7	Sustainability Skills Training
8	Any other training - General Skills and Business Training (Not Included above)

3.2 Stage in Procedure

This is the first stage of the procedure whereby all interested parties may submit a response, but only those meeting the selection criteria (qualification and experience) will be deemed eligible for inclusion on the DPS (Dynamic Purchasing System).

3.3 Duration of the DPS

The DPS will be established for two (2) years initially with the potential to be extended to 5 years. The DPS will be continually open for access. Should the DPS cease to operate, all members will be notified via www.etenders.gov.ie. This will not affect the delivery of any contracts awarded under the DPS.

3.4 Estimated Value of the DPS

The level of expenditure cannot be guaranteed in any given year. However, the estimated total value of any purchases pursuant to the DPS is approximately €500,000-600,000(excl. VAT) per annum. The total value anticipated over the 2-year term is circa €1,000,000.

It is emphasised, however, that these figures are provided strictly **for indicative purposes only** as there is no guaranteed expenditure.

3.5 Admission to the DPS

Admission to the DPS for each Lot:

Stage 1 – Admittance to the DPS:

The Contracting Authority invites Applications from Applicants in response to the Compliance and Selection Criteria. While Applicants are required to submit a response to and fulfil the Compliance and Selection Criteria, Applicants are **not** required to submit either a tender proposal or a pricing submission at this Stage 1 of the Competition. Tender responses and pricing submissions will instead be required in response to future (Stage 2) mini competitions, or “Quick Quote” processes conducted under the DPS.

All Applicants that meet the Compliance and Selection Criteria will be admitted to the DPS.

Ongoing application process to become a DPS Member

Economic operators may apply for admission to the DPS under one or more lots or re-apply in the case of Applicants who failed to satisfy the Compliance or Selection Criteria, at any point throughout the Term of the DPS.

Stage 2 – Award of Contracts:

All Applicants that have prequalified at Stage 1 (each a “DPS Member”) for each applicable Lot, will be invited to future Stage 2 competition(s) (“Mini-Competitions” or “Quick Quote” depending on value of contract) to submit a tender response based on the requirements set out in the relevant Stage 2 Request for Tenders/Quotation (“RFT”) (or) (“RFQ”).

Applicants can apply for one, some or all Lots.

3.6 Awarding Contracts under the DPS

Qualifying for a DPS, does not constitute an award of a contract nor does it indicate that any contract will be awarded. When contracts arise over the duration of the DPS they may be awarded in accordance with the following:

All DPS members admitted under the appropriate Lot or Lots shall be invited to tender or quote on the basis of a specification. Contracts will be awarded to the most economically advantageous tender evaluated using the specific award criteria, which will be made known to those invited to participate in the mini-tender. ATU determine the right to award a contract, contract with options, or framework agreement as they deem appropriate which meets the needs of the University.

ATU may use some or all of the following award criterion in awarding contracts under the DPS. Percentages can range from 0%-100%

- Cost
- Track Record
- Experience of Trainers
- Accreditation
- In Person or Remote Facilities/Systems for Training
- Sustainability / Green Criteria
- Innovation
- Quality Systems
- Availability for delivery on specific dates

4 Instructions to Applicants

4.1 Queries

An application means the submission by an Applicant of a completed Qualification Questionnaire and associated appendices.

Every effort has been made to ensure that this Document contains all the necessary information for the completion of applications. The Contracting Authority does not warrant or represent that this Document, or any other information given to Applicants, is accurate or complete. No liability is accepted for any error or omission (negligent or otherwise) in this document, or any other information given to Applicants.

Requests for additional information and clarification on any matters must be made by via the messaging portal on eTenders on www.etenders.gov.ie. All clarifications/additional information will be issued via the eTenders website (www.etenders.gov.ie) and will be made available to all potential Applicants who have noted their interest on the eTenders website.

All queries should be submitted in accordance with that time and date as indicated on the title page to enable clarifications to be issued to all interested Applicants in sufficient time prior to the deadline date for the receipt of applications.

4.2 Completing the Qualification Questionnaire

When completing the Qualification Questionnaire at **Appendix 1**, applicants should note the following conditions:

All questions must be completed in full and without reference to other documents or other parts of the Qualification Questionnaire.

All questions should be answered with relevance to the subject matter of this competition. For the avoidance of doubt, it is emphasised that the information requested in the Qualification Questionnaire is aimed solely at determining the suitability and choice of Applicants for entry to the DPS. In order to ensure that entry to the DPS is fair and consistent to all Applicants, you are instructed to respond to the technical questions by giving details of your skill and experience, accurately, honestly and succinctly.

Where a 'Rule' is associated with a particular criterion, Applicants must satisfy the requirements of the rule to remain eligible for consideration in the competition.

Applicants are permitted to add lines to the pro-forma tables and boxes set out within the Qualification Questionnaire if required.

All financial information should be denominated in euro (€), except where financial information is being provided in a certified or audited supporting document such as a set of financial statements in which case it is sufficient for the information to remain in its original currency.

Failure to provide a sufficient level of detail or to explain adequately any relevant matters may result in such data or information not being taken into account during the evaluation process.

Applicants are reminded that they may rely on the resources of other entities in order to establish the suitability requirements on condition that they can prove to the satisfaction of the Contracting Authority that they will have these resources at their disposal when necessary.

Applicants for qualification may include individuals, partnerships, limited companies, groupings or any combination of the foregoing with or without legal personality. However, a grouping if successful may be required to establish legal personality in order to enter into a contract.

The Contracting Authority reserves the right, subject to procurement regulations and directives, to request clarification of any matter set out in your responses to the Qualification Questionnaire at **Appendix 1**, or to request additional information from a Service Provider after the date for submission of completed Qualification Questionnaires has expired.

This document is not a contract, or part of a contract, or an offer to make a contract. The procuring entity has no obligation to enter into a contract with any Applicant.

The Contracting Authority is not responsible for and will not pay for any expense or cost incurred or loss suffered by an Applicant in the preparation or submission of its application or otherwise. Further,

the Contracting Authority is not responsible for any travel or accommodation costs incurred by the Applicant unless previously agreed in writing by the Contracting Authority. Each Applicant is fully responsible for the entirety of all expenses and/or costs it incurs in the presentation or submission of an application or in participating in this process and competition.

4.3 Submission of Applications

Applications must be submitted electronically via the eTenders post box facility on www.etenders.gov.ie only.

All applications must be compiled such that they can be read immediately using PDF readers. The closing date for applications for consideration of initial work to be awarded under the DPS is as indicated on the title page.

The Contracting Authority is not responsible for corruption in electronic documents. Applicants must ensure electronic documents are not corrupt.

Applicants should produce their response using the **DPS Qualification Questionnaire at Appendix 1** as a **SINGLE UPLOADED FILE, if possible, which is clearly labelled, page numbered and indexed.**

Applicants must ensure that they give themselves sufficient time to upload and submit all required documentation only prequalified applicants will be considered for competitions to be awarded under the DPS.

It is the responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that their application is complete and is uploaded

Evaluation of Applications.

Applications will be evaluated in accordance with the selection criteria and rules as specified in the Qualification Questionnaire.

4.4 Clarification of Applications

While not being obliged to seek clarifications from Applicants, the Contracting Authority reserves the right, at its absolute discretion, to ask Applicants for clarification or elaboration of their applications to assist in its evaluation of applications.

4.5 Interference

Any effort by the Applicant to unduly influence the Contracting Authority, relevant agency personnel or any other relevant persons or bodies in the process of examination, clarification, evaluation and comparison of Applications and in decisions concerning the award of the contract shall have their Application rejected.

In accordance with Section 38 of the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995 any money, gift or other consideration from a person holding or seeking to obtain a contract will be deemed to have been paid or given corruptly unless the contrary is proved.

4.6 Inducement to Purchase

The Contracting Authority shall be entitled to disqualify an Applicant in one of the following circumstances:

- (a) if the Applicant has offered or given or agreed to give to any person any gift or consideration of any kind as an inducement or reward for doing or forbearing to do or for having done or forborne to do, any action in relation to the obtaining or execution of this contract award procedure or showing or forbearing to show favour or disfavour to any person in relation to this contract award procedure or any other contract award procedure with the Contracting Authority, or
- (b) if like acts have been done by any other person employed by the Applicant or acting on its behalf (whether with or without the knowledge of the Applicant).

4.7 Currency and Payment

The currency and invoices in which all prices and rates shall be tendered, and which payments under the contract will be paid, shall be Euro (€). All prices and rates quoted should be exclusive of VAT.

A schedule of payments will be agreed with the successful DPS member. The Contracting Authority operates in accordance with the European Communities (Late Payment in Commercial Transactions) Regulations 2012.

4.8 Conflict of Interest

Any conflict of interest involving an applicant (or applicants in the event of a consortium bid) must be fully disclosed to the Contracting Authority. Any registrable interest involving the applicant and the Contracting Authority or employees of the Contracting Authority, or their relatives must be fully disclosed in the submission or should be communicated to the Contracting Authority immediately upon such information becoming known to the applicant, in the event of this information only coming to their notice after the submission of a bid and prior to admittance to the DPS. The terms 'registrable interest' and 'relative' shall be interpreted as per Section 2 of the Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995. Failure to disclose a conflict of interest may disqualify an applicant or invalidate an award of contract, depending on when the conflict of interest comes to light.

4.9 Freedom of Information

Applicants should be aware that, under the Freedom of Information Act 2014, information provided by them at any stage during this Competition may be liable to be disclosed. Applicants are asked to

consider if any of the information supplied by them in response to this request should not be disclosed because of its sensitivity. If this is the case, applicants should specify the information that is sensitive and the reasons for its sensitivity. The Contracting Authority cannot guarantee that any information provided by applicants, either in response to this request or while any contract awarded as a result thereof, will not be released pursuant to the Contracting Authority's obligations under law, including the Freedom of Information Act 2014, EU and Irish Government Procurement Procedures or in response to questions, debates or other parliamentary procedures in or of the Oireachtas (the Irish Parliament). The Contracting Authority accepts no liability whatsoever in respect of any information provided which is subsequently released or in respect of any consequential damage suffered as a result of such disclosure.

4.10 Tax Compliance

It will be a condition of award of any contract that the successful DPS member shall, for the term of such contract(s), comply with all EU and domestic tax laws. Applicants are referred to www.revenue.ie for further information. Prior to the award of any contract arising out of this competition, the successful applicant may be required to supply its Tax Clearance Access Number and Tax Reference Number, if not already available, to facilitate online verification of their tax status by the Contracting Authority. By supplying these numbers, the successful DPS member, acknowledges and agrees that the Contracting Authority has the permission of the successful DPS member to verify its tax cleared position online.

4.11 Irish Legislation and Law

Applicants should be aware that national legislation applies in other matters such as Employment, Working Hours, Official Secrets, Data Protection and Health and Safety. Applicants must have regard to statutory terms relating to minimum pay and to legally binding industrial or sectoral agreements in delivering contracts awarded to the Contracting Authority which exist or emerge over the life of the DPS.

The contract(s) awarded on foot of this process will be governed by Irish law.

4.12 Change in the Composition of an Applicant

The Contracting Authority reserves the right, but is not obliged, to disqualify any applicant that makes any change to its composition after submission of a Qualification Questionnaire. However, applicants are entitled to reapply on basis of a new membership structure in the case of consortiums or groupings. It should be noted that lead applicant cannot submit under more than one application.

4.13 Notification of the Evaluation

All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their applications following evaluation and any necessary clarifications within 10 days, or where the volume of responses is large within a maximum of 15 days. Potential outcomes can be:

- (a) Letter of Intent of admittance to the DPS, subject to agreement to the terms and conditions.
- (b) Letter of Regret providing information on reasons for rejection.

Note: Unsuccessful applicants may reapply at any time.

4.14 Policy on Personal Debriefings

Based on the provision of the information to unsuccessful applicants as outlined above and due to resourcing constraints, the Contracting Authority will not be offering individual debriefing meetings to unsuccessful applicants.