Request for Tenders (RFT) for the Delivery of Accredited Technical Programmes for the Financial Services Sector

Contracting Authority	IBEC CLG t/a IFS Skillnet
Tender Reference:	RFT202601
Closing Date for Queries:	12 noon 25 November 2026 (Irish local time)
Tender Submission Deadline:	12 noon 11 December 2026 (Irish local time)
Competition Procedure:	Open

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An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais, Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta
Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

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Part 1: Introduction

1.1 IFS Skillnet – Background Information

1.1.1 IFS Skillnet ("the Network") operated by Ibec CLG is a Skillnet Ireland Network for all companies of all sizes in the international financial services sector including international banking, funds, asset management, insurance, corporate treasury, fintech and aircraft leasing as well as companies who supply professional services to the sector including accountancy, legal and IT services.

1.1.2 The Network companies work collaboratively to share best practice and respond effectively to the specific skills needs of the sector. The Network addresses both technical and non-technical skills needs of members.

1.1.3 The objective of the Network is to support the growth of member companies by enhancing industry specific skills and knowledge, broadening access to skills development opportunities and encouraging ongoing professional development.

1.1.4 The Network is promoted by Ibec Financial Services Ireland, a trade association based within Ibec. Membership of the Network is open to private enterprises in the international financial services sector and companies providing professional services to the sector based in the Republic of Ireland.

1.1.5 The Network is funded by member companies and by the Training Networks Programme, an initiative of Skillnet Ireland, funded from the National Training Fund through the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

1.2 This Public Procurement Competition – Executive Summary

1.2.1 This public procurement competition ("the **Competition**") relates to the delivery of Accredited Technical Programmes for the Financial Services Sector ("**the Programmes**") and provision of related services as described in Part 4 of this Request for Tenders ("**RFT**") document - ("the **Services**").

1.2.2 The objective of the Competition is to establish a single-party framework for the provision of the Services ("the **Framework**").

1.2.3 The Network invites responses ("**Tenders**") to this RFT from economic operators ("**Tenderers**") for the admission to the Framework for the provision of the Services.

1.2.4 Tenders must be submitted in line with the instructions set out in Part 2 of this RFT and in particular with the requirements of clause 2.2 (Compliant Tenders).

1.2.5 Compliant Tenders will be assessed in line with the procedures set out in Part 3 of this RFT with the objective of identifying the Tenderer for admission to the Framework - the "**Successful Tenderer**".

1.2.6 Any framework agreement that may result from this Competition ("the **Framework Agreement**") will be established for a term of 48 months ("the **Framework Agreement Term**").

1.2.7 The Network reserves the right to extend the Term by up to 24 months with a maximum of two such extensions to a maximum term of 96 months.

1.2.8 Any Call-Off Contract that may be awarded throughout the Framework Agreement Term shall be awarded in line with the methodology set out in clause 2.3 of this RFT.

1.2.9 The duration of a Call-Off Contract awarded under this Framework may be go beyond the Framework Agreement Term.

Part 2: Instructions to Tenderers

2.1 This RFT

2.1.1 While every effort has been made to provide comprehensive and accurate information and requirements and specifications, Tenderers must form their own conclusions about the solution needed to meet the requirements set out in this RFT. Tenderers and recipients of this RFT may wish to consult their own legal advisers in relation to this RFT or the subject matter thereof.

2.1.2 All information supplied by the Tenderers may be treated as contractually binding on the Tenderers if accepted by the Network.

2.1.3 This RFT does not constitute an offer to enter into the Framework Agreement or any contract. Furthermore, the conclusion of the Framework Agreement with the Tenderer admitted to the Framework ("**Framework Supplier**") does not guarantee the award of any contract whatsoever. For the avoidance of doubt, no commitment of any kind (contractual or otherwise) shall exist unless and until a Call-Off Contract for the delivery of the Services has been awarded to a Framework Supplier by or on behalf of the Network. Any notification of preferred bidder status by the Network shall not give rise to any enforceable rights by the Tenderer. The Network may cancel this Competition and/or choose not to proceed with some elements of the Services at any time prior to the Framework Agreement being executed by or on behalf of the Network. The Network does not bind itself to accept the lowest priced or any Tender.

2.1.4 This RFT supersedes and replaces all previous documentation, communications and correspondence between the Network and Tenderers, and Tenderers should place no reliance on such previous documentation and correspondence. Tenderers to this RFT should study the contents of this RFT carefully, including the information and documents contained in the Appendices (attached to this RFT as separate documents).

2.2 Compliant Tenders

2.2.1 Tenderers are required to complete and submit the following documents as part of their Tender:

- the Form of Tender attached to this RFT as Appendix 1;
- the Pricing Schedule attached to this RFT as Appendix 2;
- the Tenderer's Statement attached to this RFT as Appendix 3;
- the Article 57 Declaration attached to this RFT as Appendix 4.

2.2.2 Please note that the Framework Agreement at Appendix 5 of this RFT and the Data Processing Agreement (DPA) at Appendix 6 do not need to be submitted as part of a Tender and will only be required from the Successful Tenderer at the Framework Agreement execution stage.

2.2.3 The Tender and all supporting documentation (if any) must be in English language only. All supporting documentation should be page numbered and cross referenced to the RFT where appropriate and be fully indexed.

2.2.4 Tenderers **are not permitted to make any alteration whatsoever** to the Form of Tender, the Pricing Schedule, the Tenderer's Statement, and the Article 57 Declaration, other than filling in the required information.

2.2.5 Tenders must not include or be accompanied by any statement that could be construed as rendering the Tender equivocal and/or placing it on a different footing from other Tenders.

2.2.6 All documents requiring a signature must be signed by a duly authorised officer of the Tenderer.

2.2.7 All prices set out in the Pricing Schedule must be fully priced in euros (€), inclusive of all fees and expenses and exclusive of VAT. VAT must be shown separately.

2.2.8 Tenders must be submitted in accordance with the requirements set out in paragraph 2.6 of this RFT.

2.2.9 Received Tenders will be initially reviewed for completeness and for compliance with the requirements set out in the RFT.

2.2.10 If a Tenderer fails to comply in any respect with the requirements set out in the RFT (including by failure to provide sufficient detail or adequate explanation), or is ambiguous or unclear, the Network may in its absolute discretion:

a) reject the relevant Tender as non-compliant;

b) without prejudice to the Network's right to reject the Tender, seek clarification from the Tenderer in respect of the relevant Tender including requesting the Tenderer to provide the Network with information or items which have not been provided or have been provided in an incorrect form; and/or

c) without prejudice to the Network's right to reject the Tender, waive a requirement which, in the opinion of the Network, is minor, procedural or non-material.

2.2.11 Tenderers should note that the onus is on Tenderers to fully respond to this RFT (including, without limitation, to demonstrate compliance). The Network is under no obligation to seek clarifications or supplemental information but has the right, at its absolute discretion, to do so.

2.2.12 Any Tender that is rejected for non-compliance will not be evaluated further. The Network's decision on whether a Tender is compliant will be final.

2.2.13 The compliant Tenders shall be assessed in line with procedures set out in Part 3 of this RFT to identify the Tenderer for admission to the Framework.

2.3 The Establishment and Operation of the Framework

2.3.1 The Network will, subject to the right to cancel this Competition (as set out at paragraph 2.1.3 of this RFT), establish the Framework with the top scoring Tenderer that complies with the requirements set out in this RFT – ("the **Successful Tenderer**").

2.3.2 The Successful Tenderer shall be required to enter into a Framework Agreement with the Network by signing and submitting to the Network the Framework Agreement and the DPA in line with provisions of clause 3.7 of this RFT.

2.3.3 If, following the establishment of the Framework, the Network wishes to run the Programmes via this Framework, it shall contact the Framework Supplier to confirm the necessary details (such as date, location, number of attendees, delivery methodology, and other specifics of the Programmes). Once the requirements of the Programmes have been agreed, the Network shall issue a confirmation email to the Framework Supplier which shall constitute an award of the Call-Off Contract to deliver the Programmes.

2.3.4 If, during the lifetime of the Framework Agreement, the need arises for additional services that fall within the scope of this Framework Agreement, the Framework Supplier may be invited to submit a proposal for the delivery of such additional services (if any).

2.3.5 If the proposal is deemed to address the needs and requirements of the Network and if the Network accepts the proposal, it shall issue a confirmation email to the Framework Supplier which shall constitute an award of the Call-Off Contract to deliver the required services.

2.3.6 Following an award of a Call-Off Contract (if any) under the Framework, the Framework Supplier shall provide the Services in accordance with this RFT and their Tender, as accepted by the Network, and in adherence to the instructions of the Network.

2.3.7 If a Framework Supplier fails to deliver the Services in line with agreed parameters (which shall be within those set out in this RFT, the Framework Agreement, and the Framework Supplier's Tender submission or the subsequent Proposal, as per 2.3.4 above), the Network shall issue a written notification to this effect to facilitate the improvement of their performance. Where a Framework Supplier fails to improve its performance within the timelines specified by the Network, the Network reserves the right to terminate the Framework Agreement with the Framework Supplier by giving 30 calendar day notice.

2.3.8 Tenderers should note that in line with clause 3.8, the appointment to the Framework does not confer exclusivity on Framework Supplier and there is no guarantee that the Network will use the Framework. The use, if any, of the Framework will be at the sole discretion of the Network.

2.4 Acceptance of RFT Requirements

Each Tenderer is required to accept the provisions of this RFT. ALL TENDERERS MUST RETURN, with their Tender, the signed Tenderer's Statement, as set out in Appendix 3. Tenderers MUST NOT amend the Tenderer's Statement other than fill in the required information.

2.5 Consortia and Subcontractors

2.5.1 Tenders may be submitted by groups of companies (a consortium) or individually. Should a Call-Off Contract under this Framework Agreement be awarded to a consortium, each company in the consortium shall be jointly and severally liable to the Network for the fulfilment of the contract. Tenderers must make clear which companies are proposed to be members of the consortium and which are to be sub-contractors. Any change in relation to consortia and sub-contracting after the Tenderer has submitted its Tender must be notified to the Network. Tenderers should note that such changes may result in disqualification of that group.

2.5.2 In the case of a consortium, the Tender must be submitted as a single integrated Tender which will be evaluated and marked as a single Tender. The entity/person who will deal with all matters relating to this Competition and who will carry overall responsibility for the provision of the Services if awarded a Call-Off Contract (the "**Prime Tenderer**") must be identified at Section A of the Form of Tender. Please note that the Network will only deal with the Prime Tenderer regarding all matters related to this Competition.

2.5.3 Relevant information must also be provided in respect of consortium members and/or sub-contractors who will play a significant role in the provision of the Services if awarded a Call-Off Contract.

2.6 Tender Submission Requirements

2.6.1 Tenderers must submit one soft copy of their Tender via the electronic post-box available on eTenders website (www.etenders.gov.ie) by **12 noon (Irish local time) on Friday, 11 December 2026 ("Tender Submission Deadline")**.

2.6.2 The Network may, at its absolute discretion, extend the Tender Submission Deadline. Any extension will be notified by the Network via eTenders before the original Tender Submission Deadline.

2.6.3 The onus is on Tenderers to ensure that their Tenders reach the eTenders post-box on time. It is not advisable to wait until the last moment to upload documents in case of internet connection difficulties or other technical problems. Tenderers should also note that after the Tender Submission Deadline has passed, the uploading facility will be closed by eTenders. Accordingly, after the Tender Submission Deadline has passed, it will not be possible to upload Tenders to the eTenders post-box.

2.6.4 Please note there is a maximum of 10MB limit for each document sent to the eTenders post-box.

2.6.5 Neither the Network nor eTenders take responsibility for documents which do not reach them by the Tender Submission Deadline, for any reason. It is advised that Tenderers give sufficient time to upload all documents.

2.6.6 Tenders should be submitted in PDF format to ensure their compatibility.

2.6.7 Tenderers must ensure that the documents are legible and that they are not corrupt. Neither the the Network nor eTenders take responsibility for corruption or illegibility of documents.

2.6.8 Faxed, emailed, posted or late Tenders will be rejected.

2.6.9 Each Tenderer is limited to submitting one Tender in his/her own capacity and one Tender as part of a consortium/group of undertakings in response this RFT. If more than one Tender is submitted, the Network shall randomly select one Tender for the inclusion in the Competition.

2.7 Queries and Clarifications

2.7.1 All queries or requests for clarification relating to any aspect of this Competition or to this RFT **must be** directed to the Network through the Questions and Answers facility on eTenders website.

2.7.2 An approach to any person within or associated with the Network in respect of this Competition in a manner other than that set out in 2.7.1 may, at the absolute discretion of the Network, result in the elimination of the Tenderer from further participation in this Competition.

2.7.3 Queries must be submitted not later than **12 noon** Irish local time on **Wednesday, 25 November 2026** ("**Deadline for Queries**"). Queries received after the Deadline for Queries may not be responded to.

2.7.4 The reply shall be issued via the eTenders website by **5pm** Irish local time on **Wednesday, 2 December** 2026.

2.7.5 Where appropriate, questions may be amalgamated. Tenderers should note that the Network will endeavour to respond to reasonable queries but does not undertake to respond to all queries received. Tenderers should also note that the Network will not make responses or clarifications to individual Tenderers privately.

2.7.6 If a Tenderer believes a query and/or its response is confidential or commercially sensitive it must mark the query as "confidential" or "commercially sensitive". If the Network, at its absolute discretion, is satisfied that the query and/or its response should be properly regarded as confidential or commercially sensitive, the nature of the query and its response will be kept confidential (subject to the Network's obligations under law).

2.7.7 If the Network is of the opinion that it would be inappropriate to answer the query on a confidential basis, it will notify the Tenderer accordingly and require the Tenderer to either withdraw the query or to raise any objection within three calendar days of such notification and to state the grounds for its objection.

2.7.8 If the Tenderer does not withdraw the query or raise any objection within the specified period, or the Network is of the opinion that, notwithstanding the objection of the Tenderer, the query is not confidential or commercially sensitive, the Network may issue the query and its response to all Tenderers.

2.7.9 The Network reserves the right to update or alter the information contained in this document at any time prior to the Tender Submission Deadline. Participating Tenderers will be so informed through the eTenders website. In the event of such updates or alterations the Network reserves the right (but is not obliged) to postpone the deadline for the receipt of Tenders to allow Tenderers sufficient time to respond.

2.8 Tendering Costs

All costs and expenses incurred by Tenderers relating to their participation in this Competition, including but not being limited to demonstrations and/or presentations, shall be borne by and are a matter for discharge by the Tenderers exclusively.

2.9 Confidentiality

2.9.1 All documentation, data, statistics, drawings, information, patterns, samples or material disclosed or furnished by the Network to Tenderers during the course of this Competition:

a. are furnished for the sole purpose of replying to this RFT;

b. may not be used, communicated, reproduced or published for any other purpose without the prior written permission of the Network;

c. shall be treated as confidential by the Tenderer and by any third parties (including subcontractors) engaged or consulted by the Tenderer; and

d. must be returned immediately to the Network upon cancellation or completion of this Competition if so requested by the Network.

2.9.2 In addition, the Framework Supplier shall be required to hold confidential all information, documentation and other material received, provided, or obtained arising from their participation in this Framework Agreement and shall not disclose same to any third party except to its professional advisers as necessary for the delivery of the Services.

2.10 Pricing

2.10.1 All prices quoted **must be** fixed and all-inclusive (i.e. including but not being limited to costs, expenses and indexation), be expressed in Euro only and exclusive of VAT. The applicable VAT should be indicated separately. **Prices quoted in response to this RFT shall not increase over the Framework Agreement Term, unless approved by the Network in line with provisions of clause 2.11 below.**

2.10.2 Any currency variations occurring over the Framework Agreement Term shall be borne by the Tenderer.

2.10.3 Payments for the Services provided throughout the Framework Agreement Term shall be made within 30 days of receipt by the Network of a valid invoice. The invoice shall be submitted on completion of the Programmes.

2.10.4 Tenderers must confirm (in the Tenderer's Statement furnished at Appendix 3) that all prices quoted in the Tender will remain valid for six months commencing from the Tender Submission Deadline ("**Tender Validity Period**"). Tenderers are required to further confirm that, if admitted to the Framework, the fees quoted in the Pricing Schedule at Appendix 2 **shall not increase over the Framework Agreement Term,** unless approved by the Network as per provisions of clause 2.11 below.

2.11 Price Review

2.11.1 Framework Supplier may request a review of fees quoted in response to this RFT ("**Price Review**") on or after the second anniversary of the Framework Agreement.

2.11.2 The Price Review must clearly set the grounds for the request and provide vouched evidence in support of this request; such evidence must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Network that the reasons for the Price Review are outside the Framework Supplier's control (e.g. inflation; price / wage increases in the market).

2.11.3 Approval, in whole or in part (if any), of any requested price increase will be at the sole discretion of the Network.

2.11.4 In the event that the prices are revised, they shall apply from the next Call-Off Contract awarded under the Framework Agreement (if any) for the remainder of the Framework Agreement Term. For avoidance of any doubt, only one revision of fees /rates is permissible per contract year.

2.11.5 If the prices are revised, the Framework Supplier shall invoice the Network in line with the revised fees and in the manner set out in 2.10.3.

2.11.6 If the Network accepts the Framework Supplier's invoice it shall discharge the relevant amount within 30 days of receipt by the Network of such invoice.

2.12 Environmental, Social and Labour Law

2.12.1 In the performance of the Services the Framework Supplier including their sub-contractors (if any), shall be required to comply with all applicable obligations arising of environmental, social and labour law that apply at the place where the Services are provided, that have been established by EU law, national law, collective agreements or by international, environmental, social and labour law listed in Annex X of Directive 2014/24/EU.

2.12.2 The Framework Supplier shall be solely responsible in law for the employment, remuneration, taxes, immigration and work permits of all personnel retained for the purposes of providing the Services.

2.12.3 Tenderers must, in the Tenderer's Statement at Appendix 3 confirm that they have taken account of their legal obligations relating to employment protection and working conditions relating to the provision of the Services sought under this RFT, including compliance with any applicable statutory terms relating to minimum pay and to any legally binding sectoral agreements and must take these into account when preparing Tenders. Failure to make the said statement will render the Tender non-compliant.

2.13 Publicity

No publicity regarding this Competition, admission to the Framework, or award of a contract is permitted unless and until the Network has given its prior written consent to the relevant communication.

2.14 Conflicts of Interest

2.14.1 Any conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest on the part of a Tenderer, individual employees, agents, or subcontractors of a Tenderer must be fully disclosed to the Network as soon as the conflict or potential conflict is or becomes apparent. In the event of any conflict or potential conflict of interest, the Network may invite Tenderers to propose means by which the conflict might be removed.

2.14.2 The Network will, at its absolute discretion, decide on the appropriate course of action, which may in appropriate circumstances include eliminating a Tenderer from the competition or terminating any contract entered into by a Tenderer.

2.14.3 Tenderers are required to confirm, in the Tenderer's Statement at Appendix 3 to this RFT, their situation in respect of actual or potential conflict of interest.

2.15 Anti-Competitive Conduct

2.15.1 Tenderers' attention is drawn to the application of the Competition Act 2002. The Act makes it a criminal offence for Tenderers to collude on prices or terms in a public procurement competition.

2.15.2 Tenderers are required to confirm, in the Tenderer's Statement provided at Appendix 3 to this RFT, that their Tender is a bona fide tender.

2.16 Canvassing

Any effort by a Tenderer (or anyone acting on behalf of a Tenderer with or without its knowledge) to influence the personnel of the Network in the process of examination, evaluation and comparison of Tenders and recommendations concerning the admission to the Framework may result in the rejection of the Tender.

2.17 Industry Terms Used in this RFT

Where reference is made to a particular item, source, process, trademark, or type in this RFT then all such references are to be given the meaning generally understood in the relevant industry and operational environment.

2.18 Tax Clearance

2.18.1 It will be a condition of the admission to the Framework that the Framework Supplier complies with all EU and domestic taxation laws and requirements. Tenderers are referred to www.revenue.ie for further information.

2.18.2 Prior to the admission to the Framework, the Successful Tenderer shall be required to supply their Tax Clearance Access Number and Tax Reference Number to facilitate on-line verification of the Tenderer's tax status by the Network.

2.18.3 Where the Successful Tenderer is non-resident in Ireland, an up-to-date statement of suitability on tax grounds from the Irish Revenue Commissioners may be provided to the Network in lieu of a tax clearance certificate. The application form and other information relating to this may be obtained at www.revenue.ie.

2.18.4 Unless otherwise specified by the Network, the Successful Tenderer will be given seven calendar days to produce the details specified at clause 2.18.2 or clause 2.18.3, as applicable. If a Tenderer fails to produce the required details within the said period, the Network reserves the right (but is not obliged) to offer the place in the Framework to the next highest ranked Tenderer.

2.18.5 By providing the details specified in clauses 2.18.2 or 2.18.3 the Tenderer acknowledges and agrees that the Network has the permission of the Tenderer to verify its tax cleared position online.

2.18.6 The Framework Supplier shall ensure their compliance with the applicable tax laws for the Framework Agreement Term.

2.19 Intellectual and Other Property Rights

2.19.1 The Tenderers must undertake to ensure that all and any necessary consents and/or licenses are obtained and in place for any possible contract that may be awarded under this Framework Agreement. The Framework Supplier will indemnify the Network and hold the Network harmless from and in respect of all and any liability, loss, damages, claims, costs or expenses which may arise by reason of any breach of third-party Intellectual Property Rights in so far as any such rights are used for any contract which may emanate from this Competition and this Framework Agreement.

2.19.2 Tenderers must confirm in the Tenderer's Statement furnished at Appendix 3 to this RFT, that they undertake to comply with the provisions of this clause 2.19 if successful.

2.20 Data Protection

2.20.1 Tenderers are referred to the Privacy Statement at https://www.ibec.ie/privacy in respect of the information provided in response to this RFT.

2.20.1 To the extent that the Framework Supplier processes personal data on behalf of the Network, they must do so in compliance with all requirements of data protection law and such guidelines as may be issued by the Data Protection Commissioner from time to time including but not limited to the EU General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation 2016/679) and in accordance with the DPA set out at Appendix 6 to this RFT.

2.20.2 Tenderers must confirm in the Tenderer's Statement furnished at Appendix 3 to this RFT, that if successful, they shall comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Law.

2.21 Insurance

2.21.1 Tenderers must have appropriate and adequate insurance cover and be able to submit insurance details if/when required by the Network.

2.21.2 The Network does not accept any liability whatsoever arising from the acts or omissions by the Successful Tenderer. Any and all claims (if any) arising directly or indirectly in relation to Services provided shall be the responsibility of the Successful Tenderer.

2.22 Language

All correspondence or documentation submitted in response to or in relation to this RFT shall be in the English language. In circumstances where an original document which is to form part of the response or correspondence with the Network is not in the English or Irish language, Tenderers must provide an English translation certified as accurate by the translator, together with a copy of the original document.

2.23 Law

Irish law is applicable to this Competition. The Irish courts will have exclusive jurisdiction in relation to any dispute(s) arising from this Competition.

2.24 Withdrawal from this Competition

2.24.1 If at any stage following the submission of their Tender Tenderers decide to withdraw from this Competition, they must immediately notify the Network via eTenders messaging facility.

2.24.2 In the event where the Successful Tenderer withdraws their Tender from the Competition, the Network has the right to (but is not obliged to) award the Framework Agreement to the next highest-ranked Tenderer identified in line with procedures set out in this RFT.

Part 3: Tender Evaluation

3.1 Overview

Only those Tenders that have not been eliminated for non-compliance with paragraph 2.2 above and have not been excluded under Article 57 (1) of Directive 2014/24/EC as implemented into Irish law by Regulation 57 of the European Communities (Award of Public Authority Contracts) Regulations 2016 (Statutory Instrument 284 of 2016) will be evaluated in accordance with the Award Criteria and scoring methodology set out in this Part 3.

3.2 Award Criteria

3.2.1 The award of the Framework Agreement will be determined on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender identified using the following award criteria and weighting:

Criteria	Maximum Score Available	Minimum Score Required
1. Cost	300	n/a
2. Quality of Resources	350	210
3. Training Programmes Quality	350	210
Total Maximum Score Available	**1000**	**n/a**

3.2.2 Tenderers must achieve the above set out Minimum Score Required which equates 60% of the Maximum Score Available under criteria 2 and 3 ("**Quality Criteria**").

3.2.3 Tenders that fail to achieve the Minimum Score Required in any of the Quality Criteria will be eliminated from the Competition and will not be assessed further. Such Tender's Pricing Schedule will not be included in the calculation for the purpose of determining Cost scores.

3.2.4 Explanation of Award Criteria

3.2.4.1 ***Cost***

i. Cost means the *Total Cost,* as calculated from the fees quoted in the Pricing Schedule furnished at Appendix 2 of this RFT.

ii. *Tenderers* are required to submit the Pricing Schedule furnished at Appendix 2 which must be completed in line with instructions provided in the said Appendix 2. **An incomplete or incorrectly completed Pricing Schedule may lead to the elimination of such Tender from the Competition.**

3.2.4.2 ***Quality of Resources***

i. Quality of Resources refers to the expertise of the individual(s) proposed to deliver the Services and will be assessed in terms of their qualifications, individual specialist knowledge and expertise, and in terms of the overall relevancy and suitability of the proposed resources to deliver the Services in line with required parameters.

ii. Please note that proposed trainer(s) are expected to possess all of the following:

- ✓ Qualifications **and** experience in delivering programmes on relevant financial services topics;
  Experience providing comprehensive administrative support and backup services for learners.

iii. Tenderers must provide the required information by completing section B of the Form of Tender furnished at Appendix 1 to this RFT.

3.2.4.3 ***Training Programmes Quality***

i. Training Programmes Quality refers to the proposed programme content for each of the required programmes and the approach to their delivery. Specifically, responses under this criterion will be assessed in terms of the proposed training programmes content, their duration, certification, the delivery methodology, learner supports, proposed learning outcomes and in terms of the extent to which the stated requirements of the Network are met.

ii. Tenderers must provide the required information by completing section C of the Form of Tender furnished at Appendix 1 to this RFT.

3.2.4.4 ***Please note that:***

i. Tenderers **are not permitted to make any alteration whatsoever** to the Form of Tender or the Pricing Schedule, other than filling in the required information (see clause 2.2.4 of the RFT).

ii. Tenderers are advised to follow the guidance notes provided in the Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

iii. It shall not suffice to simply state that the requirements of the Network will met or that the proposed resources have the necessary expertise. Tenderers must provide details of the stated expertise and explain how the requirements will be met.

iv. Tenderers must detail the proposed form and level of certification for each programme, specifying whether the award is aligned to the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or holds specific industry accreditation.

3.3 Scoring Mechanism

3.3.1 Cost

The lowest priced Tender shall be awarded the maximum score available under this criterion; the cost score of subsequent Tenders shall be calculated using the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{The lowest priced tender x maximum score available}}{\text{Cost of tender being evaluated}}$$

3.3.2 Quality Criteria

Tenders will be evaluated under Award Criteria 2 and 3 in terms of the quality of responses and on a relative basis against other valid Tenders received, bearing in mind the following:

Score Band	Description	Score
Outstanding	Response demonstrates that the Services would be delivered to an exceptional standard. Minimal risk.	100% of the maximum score available
Excellent	Response demonstrates that the Services would be delivered to an excellent standard. Minimal risk.	90% of the maximum score available
Very Good	Response demonstrates that the Services would be delivered to a high standard. Little risk.	80% of the maximum score available
Good	Response demonstrates that the Services would be delivered to a good standard. Little risk.	70% of the maximum score available
Acceptable	Response demonstrates that the Services would be delivered to an acceptable standard. Acceptable risk.	60% of the maximum score available
Mediocre	Response does not sufficiently demonstrate that the Services would be delivered to an acceptable standard. High risk.	40% of the maximum score available
Poor	Response demonstrates that the Services would be delivered to a poor standard. Very high risk.	20% of the maximum score available

3.3.3 Tenderers should note that the statements in the description of the score bands are separate and not cumulative.

3.3.4 Tenderers should also note that responses to this RFT will be evaluated in their own right. No recognition will be given to information previously submitted. No unsolicited communications from Tenderers will be entertained during the evaluation period.

3.4 Presentation of Proposals

Tenderers may be required to make a presentation of the proposal contained in their Tender. The Network will not be responsible for the cost of such presentations (in accordance with paragraph 2.8). Performance at presentations will NOT be evaluated.

3.5 Communicating Competition Outcome

3.5.1 The Network shall communicate the outcome of the Competition via notification letter, which shall be issued via eTenders to each Tenderer individually.

3.5.2 Tenderers should note that the Network may, when notifying unsuccessful Tenderers of the result in this Competition, include the scores obtained by the Tenderer concerned and the scores obtained by the Successful Tenderer in respect of each award criterion assessed by the Network.

3.6 Award of the Framework Agreement

3.6.1 The award of the Framework Agreement to the Successful Tenderer shall be subject to the confirmation of the Successful Tenderer's compliance with applicable taxation laws, as per paragraph 2.18 of this RFT.

3.6.2 Where the Successful Tenderer is found to be non-compliant with applicable taxation laws or if it fails to provide the details necessary to verify their tax status within the timeframes specified in clause 2.18, the Network may (but is not obliged to) award the Framework Agreement to the next highest-ranked Tenderer identified in line with procedures set out in this RFT.

3.7 Framework Agreement & Data Processing Agreement

3.7.1 Following successful verification of the Successful Tenderer's tax cleared status and, if applicable, verification of any other information provided by the Successful Tenderer, the Network shall send the Framework Agreement (furnished at Appendix 5 to this RFT) and the DPA (furnished at Appendix 6 of this RFT) to the Successful Tenderer confirming the award of the Framework Agreement.

3.7.2 The Successful Tenderer shall sign and return the Framework Agreement and the DPA to the Network no later than seven calendar days from the date of the Network sending the documents.

3.7.3 Where the signed Framework Agreement and/or the Data Processing Agreement have not been received by the Network within the period specified at paragraph 3.7.2, then the Network may (but is not obliged to) award the Framework Agreement to the next highest-ranked Tenderer.

3.7.4 No commitment of any kind, contractual or otherwise shall exist unless and until the Framework Agreement is executed by the Network and a Successful Tenderer ("**the**

Parties"). Any notification of preferred bidder status by the Network shall not give rise to any enforceable rights by the Tenderer. The Network may cancel this Competition at any time prior to the Framework Agreement being executed by both Parties.

3.8 No Guarantee of Work

3.8.1 The appointment of the Successful Tenderer to the Framework does not confer exclusivity on Framework Supplier and does not constitute a commitment or guarantee from the Network to draw any Services from the Framework Supplier.

3.8.2 Furthermore, the Network does not give any guarantee and/or warrant the actual value of any of the Services and/or number of contracts (if any) which may be awarded in connection with this Framework. The Network is not and will not be under any obligation to avail of the Framework.

3.8.3 The Network reserves the right to carry out separate procurement processes for the services falling within the scope of the Framework should it, at its sole discretion, consider it appropriate to do so. In this event the Network shall observe all applicable public procurement rules and shall not afford any advantage to the Framework Supplier.

3.8.4 In the event where the Network wishes to run the Programmes via the Framework, it shall do so in accordance with the call-off mechanism set out in clause 2.3 above.

Part 4: Requirements and Specifications

4.1 Scope of the Framework Agreement

4.1.1 The scope of the Framework Agreement comprises the delivery of Accredited Technical Programmes for the Financial Services Sector ("**the Programmes**") and the provision of associated services and additional services (if any) (together "**the Services**") in line with requirements set out in this Part 4 of the RFT.

4.1.2 It is envisaged that the Programmes may need to be delivered up to 2 times per annum, dependent on demand, availability of funding, and Framework Supplier's performance. Please note, however, that this number is indicative only. The demand (if any) for the Programmes shall be determined by the Network at its sole discretion. It is envisaged that the delivery would commence in January 2027.

4.2 Programme Objectives

4.2.1 The main purpose of the Programmes is to improve the technical knowledge of professionals in the financial services sector through the provision of accredited training programmes. The Programmes must have existing accreditation and should cover the following topics:

1) Professional Certificate in Derivatives and Structured Solutions for Funds and Asset Management
2) Professional Certificate in Data Protection
3) Professional Certificate in Digital Financial Services and Data Analytics
4) Professional Certificate in Financial Crime Prevention
5) Professional Certificate in International Investment Fund Services
6) Professional Certificate in Capital Markets, Investments and Funds
7) Professional Diploma in Advanced Operational Risk Management in Financial Services
8) Professional Diploma in Digital Transformation in Financial Services
9) Professional Diploma in Advanced Banking Risk Management
10) Professional Diploma in Alternative Investments for Funds and Asset Management
11) Professional Diploma in Cultural Change in Financial Services
12) Prof Diploma in Sustainable Finance for Compliance Professionals
13) Professional Diploma in Compliance
14) MSc in Compliance
15) Professional Certificate in Artificial Intelligence Fundamentals in Financial Services
16) The Professional Diploma in Artificial Intelligence Management in Financial Services
17) The Professional Diploma in Artificial Intelligence Models and Programming in Financial Services

4.2.2 The above list is not definitive or exhaustive. Additional topics or technical programmes may be required over the Term of the Framework Agreement. Any such additional requirements will be managed in line with Additional Services provisions.

4.3 Required Certification

4.3.1 The Programmes must be certified at the following levels on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ):

Programme	NFQ Level
Professional Certificate in Derivatives and Structured Solutions for Funds and Asset Management	Level 7
Professional Certificate in Data Protection	Level 9
Professional Certificate in Digital Financial Services and Data Analytics	Level 9
Professional Certificate in Financial Crime Prevention	Level 9
Professional Certificate in Investment Funds Services	Level 9
Professional Certificate in Capital Markets, Investments and Funds	Level 9
Professional Diploma Advanced Operational Risk Management in Financial Services	Level 9
Professional Diploma Digital Transformation in Financial Services	Level 9
Professional Diploma in Advanced Banking Risk Management	Level 9
Professional Diploma in Alternative Investments for Funds and Asset Management	Level 9
Professional Diploma in Cultural Change in Financial Services	Level 9
Professional Diploma in Sustainable Finance for Compliance Professionals	Level 8
Professional Diploma in Compliance	Level 7
MSc Compliance	Level 9
Professional Certificate in Artificial Intelligence Fundamentals in Financial Services	Level 7
The Professional Diploma in Artificial Intelligence Management in Financial Services	Level 9
The Professional Diploma in Artificial Intelligence Models and Programming in Financial Services	Level 9

4.3.2 Please also note that Tenderers are required to detail the proposed form and level of certification for each programme, specifying whether the award is aligned to the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or holds specific industry accreditation.

4.4 Target Audience

The target audience are professionals in the financial services sector in Ireland who operate at various levels of experience and responsibility within a highly regulated and fast paced financial services environment. The purpose of these Programmes is to add technical knowledge to the repertoire of industry professionals.

4.5 Required Content / Learning Outcomes per Programme

4.5.1 Proposed programme content must meet the requirements provided in the table below:

Programme	Professional Certificate in Derivatives and Structured Solutions for Funds and Asset Management

Content	• The programme content should address the broad range of derivative products employed in international financial services.
	• Topics may include:
	  ○ Analysing forwards, futures, options, and swaps
	  ○ Understanding derivative markets
	  ○ Evaluating valuation principles
	  ○ Navigating regulatory issues

Programme	Professional Certificate in Data Protection

Content	• The programme content should address obligations imposed by the GDPR in law and practice.
	• Topics may include:
	  ○ Understanding and interpreting contemporary legislation (National, EU and International)
	  ○ Designing a data protection framework
	  ○ Impact of cloud and social media

Programme	Professional Certificate in Digital Financial Services and Data Analytics

Content	• The programme content should address the challenges and opportunities provided by integrating data and advanced analytics in the provision and management of financial services.
	• Topics may include;
	  ○ Statistics (e.g. Standard Deviation, Correlation, Null Hypothesis),
	  ○ Data Analysis (e.g. Descriptive Statistics, Prediction/Forecasting, Time Series Analysis),
	  ○ Problem Solving Techniques,
	  ○ Business Analysis, (e.g. Requirements Management and Communication, Enterprise analysis and Solution assessment and validation)

	○ Data for Business Analytics (e.g. Data Structures/Warehouses/Cleansing, Data design approaches, Relationships between digital processes, digital technology and data) ○ Key digital technologies in financial services. ○ Artificial Intelligence, Data mining.
Programme	Professional Certificate in Financial Crime Prevention
Contents	• The programme should allow the learner to interpret contemporary legislation in the specific areas of financial crime prevention. • Topics may include; ○ Understanding and interpreting contemporary legislation in specific areas of financial crime prevention ○ Designing, implementing and monitoring a financial crime prevention framework in a financial services environment ○ Managing and Controlling risks associated with financial crime
Programme	Professional Certificate in Investment Funds Services
Contents	• The programme should introduce, discuss and describe the investment fund from its inception right through to its termination detailing the functions and parties to a fund; the roles, responsibilities and activities of all the parties to the fund and how each area interacts with each other. • Topics should include but are not limited to: ○ Investment industry overview ○ Ethics and regulation ○ Investment instruments (e.g. Equities, Derivatives and Alternative Investments) ○ Industry structure (e.g. Investment vehicles and structure) ○ Industry controls (e.g. Risk management, performance evaluation) ○ Macro and Microeconomics ○ International trade and Foreign Exchange
Programme	Professional Certificate in Capital Markets, Investments and Funds
Contents	The programme should explore of the drivers of performance of capital markets and of capital market products, the settlement and trade life cycles, regulations, and the importance of risk management and operational robustness in the fund management sector. Topics may include: ○ Understanding Financial Markets ○ Economics of Investment Management ○ Mathematics of Risk & Return ○ Hedging Portfolios & Derivatives ○ Sustainable Investing

Programme	Professional Diploma Advanced Operational Risk Management in Financial Services
Contents	• The programme should equip participants with a deep, practical understanding of operational risk management frameworks and measurement methodologies in financial institutions. • Topics may include: o financial crime prevention/AML/CFT, KYC, o external and internal fraud, o information security o IT resilience o outsourcing
Programme	Professional Diploma Digital Transformation in Financial Services
Contents	• The programme should cover key aspects of digital transformation in financial services. • Topics may include: o Governance and compliance o Information assurance and compliance. o In-depth analysis of the professional, ethical and legal practices in fintech o Payments technology – challenges and opportunities o Data analysis and visualisation o Quantitative modelling and simulation o Big data analytics o Digital forensics o Cybersecurity and IT auditing o Designing and implementing a fintech business process
Programme	Professional Diploma in Advanced Banking Risk Management
Content	• The programme should cover key aspects of Banking Risk Management. • Topics may include: o Corporate governance o Board responsibilities o Risk governance frameworks o Banking model risks o ERM frameworks o Impact of leadership, culture and behaviour on risk profile o Risk and return methodologies o Credit models o Different types of capital investments o Capital planning o Conduct risk management and frameworks

	○ Basel III operational risks ○ Reputational risk ○ Underlying balance sheet risks ○ Market risk ○ Role of asset and liability management
Programme	Professional Diploma in Alternative Investments For Funds And Asset Management
Content	• The programme should cover key topics related to alternative investment practices. • Topics may include; ○ Alternative Investment Fund structures and strategies ○ Regulatory developments ○ Valuation methodologies ○ Operations and controls to ensure compliance ○ Directives and governance – Best practice development and implementing fund servicing solutions
Programme	Professional Diploma in Cultural Change in Financial Services
Content	• The programme should explore topics related to cultural change and ethical behaviour in financial services. • Topics may include: ○ Understanding organisation culture, impact of bias & group think ○ Leading cultural change ○ Introduction to Ethics ○ Ethics – models, frameworks and challenges ○ Diversity and inclusion and its impact on decision making ○ Regulatory requirements (Central Bank of Ireland)
Programme	Professional Diploma in Sustainable Finance for Compliance Professionals
Content	• The programme should explore topics related to sustainable finance and be directed at compliance professionals. • Topics may include: ○ Foundations in Sustainable Finance for compliance professionals ○ Sustainable finance rules, regulations and policy ○ ESG investment approaches ○ SFDR ○ ESG Governance
Programme	Professional Diploma in Compliance
Content	• This programme should explore topics which enhance the skills,

	judgement and ability of professionals to deal with practical issues in the management and practice of compliance in the financial services industry . • Topics may include: o Compliance and the regulatory structure o Conduct of business rules o Legal and regulatory aspects of compliance o Compliance management
Programme	MSc Compliance
Content	• This programme should allow candidates to interpret contemporary legislation in the specific areas of governance, financial crime, data protection, and evaluate international factors influencing financial services regulation. • Topics may include: o Ethics and corporate governance o Managing for compliance o Data protection policies and procedures o Compliance Leadership
Programme	Professional Certificate in Artificial Intelligence Fundamentals in Financial Services
Content	This programme should equip financial services professionals with the requisite knowledge and skills to navigate and assume leadership roles within contemporary financial markets, which are currently being transformed by Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and technologies. It should provide participants with the competencies required to: • Optimise operational workflows, anticipate and adapt to regulatory developments, and drive substantive innovation within their respective organisations. • Advance AI implementation across business entities in a safe, secure, and efficient manner. • Maintain professional competitiveness and ensure long-term career viability by mastering the AI techniques currently shaping the financial services sector. • Topics may include: • Working effectively and responsible with AI • Enhancing productivity with AI • Using AI in FSI
Programme	The Professional Diploma in Artificial Intelligence Management in Financial Services

Content	• Thia programme should meet the needs of individuals aiming to deepen their knowledge of and insights on AI in general and AI management in financial services. It should focus on AI developments within financial services and fintech firms providing insights on issues which are key to AI management such as ethical and privacy concerns, how these are managed along with considering appropriate AI governance frameworks needed to ensure that the firm's AI is operating in a responsible and safe manner. • It should provide learners with the knowledge and skills to: o Deepen their understanding of AI developments within financial services and FinTech firms o Shape long-term AI strategies in the Financial Services industry o Ensure the ethical and compliant integration of AI in FSI o Align responsible AI initiatives with business goals, managing external partnerships, and steering strategic foresight and operational excellence. • Topics may include: o Managing responsibly with AI o Managing for results with AI o Formulating and delivering an AI Strategy
Programme	The Professional Diploma in Artificial Intelligence Models and Programming in Financial Services
Content	• This programme should meet the needs of non-technical financial services professionals responsible for developing and implementing AI strategies who want to deepen their knowledge of AI models and the code which drives them.. It should provide students with the knowledge and skills to: o Understand what it takes to adopt AI and analytics tools and techniquesLead AI-driven projects that enhance your team's efficiency and strategic value • Topics may include: o AI and Analytics models in Financial Services o Python Programming o SQL Programming

4.7 Programmes Delivery and Duration

4.7.1.1 The Programmes are expected to be delivered primarily online, however in person delivery may also be required. Tenderers must therefore be available for in person delivery in Ireland.

4.7.1.2 The Programmes should be of an appropriate duration for the NFQ level stated.

4.8 Pricing

4.8.1.1 Tenderers should note that the fees must be quoted for each Programme on a per person basis.

4.8.1.2 Tenderers should also note that fees must be quoted for both in person and online delivery of the Programmes.

4.9 Specification of the Services

4.9.1 If the Framework Supplier is awarded a Call-Off Contract (as per clause 2.3 of this RFT), it shall be required to:

i. Liaise with the Network Manager/administrator and the representative(s) of member companies and/or trainee(s) in advance of programme commencement where required and/or requested.

ii. Prepare all course materials, including customisation and printing, where applicable.

iii. Use the Network's Presentation Slides supplied at Schedule 3 of the Framework Agreement as an integral part of all presentations developed in the course of delivery of the Services.

iv. Ensure that the daily attendance is recorded for all trainees.

v. Ensure that the Network's registration form is issued to all trainees.

vi. Issue Network's training evaluation form among all programme participants on behalf of the Network.

vii. Work with trainees and/or facilities providers to resolve any minor issues arising during the Programme in relation to facilities required/provided.

viii. Communicate all material issues (if any) to the Network during the Programme to allow for their speedy resolution.

ix. Proactively engage with the Network and adhere to the requirements set out in Part 4 of this RFT to ensure effective service delivery and overall relationship management.

4.10 The Obligations of the Framework Supplier

4.10.1 The Framework Supplier shall deliver the Services in line with the requirements and specifications set out in the RFT, the Framework Agreement, the Framework Supplier's Tender, and, where applicable, Framework Supplier's Proposal, as accepted by the Network, and in adherence to the instructions of the Network in respect of timelines, reporting structures and any other matters of substance relating to the Services.

4.10.2 The Framework Supplier and all their personnel / individuals engaged in the delivery of the Services shall conform to all GDPR regulations and respect the confidentiality of information disclosed during and following on from all training courses.

4.10.3 The Framework Supplier shall ensure that only the trainer(s) / individual(s) proposed in response to this RFT ("**Key Personnel**") are delivering the Services. If the Framework Supplier proposes a replacement (for whatever reason) to the Key Personnel, such replacement personnel shall have the same level of experience and expertise or better.

4.10.4 Prior to the removal of any Key Personnel in accordance with clause 4.4.3, the Framework Supplier shall (where possible in advance of any such removal) furnish the Network with a copy of the proposed replacement's curriculum vitae and all details required to enable the Network to satisfy itself that the employee, servant, agent or contractor is appropriately qualified for the provision of the Services.

4.10.5 Any replacement to the Key Personnel shall be made only with prior Network approval and within such a time that it does not disrupt or delay the performance of the Framework Supplier's obligations under this Framework Agreement.

4.10.6 The Framework Supplier shall ensure that any correspondence with Programme participants shall be:

a) directly relevant to the training; **and**
b) be conducted via the Network's office.

4.10.7 The Framework Supplier shall communicate to the Network immediately / without delay any request from a member company / training participant including but not limited to:

a) Request for additional training where such request results from attendance at the Programme
b) Request to change the agreed delivery date(s), and/or time(s), and/or location

4.10.8 The Framework Supplier shall allow the Network's staff and /or external evaluators to attend the Programme and evaluate it as part of the quality assurance process of the Network.

4.10.9 To ensure the efficient delivery of the Services and the prompt resolution of any issues arising in relation to the Framework, the Framework Supplier shall nominate a Contract Manager who will be responsible for ensuring the delivery of a quality service throughout the Framework Agreement Term and who will act as liaison person with the Network. The Contract Manager must have the necessary authority to take decisions and deal directly with all matters relating to this Framework Agreement.

4.11 The Responsibilities of the Network

The Network undertakes to:

i. Supply the details on the number of trainees.
ii. Assist with the resolution of material issues (if any) that may arise during the delivery of the Programme.

iii. Provide the applicable templates, such as: Daily Attendance Sheet; Registration Form; and Training Programme Evaluation.

4.12 Additional Services

4.12.1 Should the Network require additional services that fall within the scope of the Framework Agreement, and should it wish to award a call of contract for such services to the Framework Supplier, the Network will follow the procedure set out in clause 2.3 above.

4.12.2 The services that shall be deemed to fall within the scope of the Framework Agreement include but are not limited to:

- Additional technical training programmes for Financial Services Sector (accredited or non-accredited)
- Additional accreditation related to the Programmes
- Other services that may be required from time to time in relation to this Framework Agreement

4.13 Important notes

4.13.1 Tenderers should observe the above set out specification of requirements in preparation of their Tenders to ensure that they sufficiently demonstrate that and how the stated Network requirements will be met.

4.13.2 Tenderers are reminded that the Network reserves the right to alter the specifics and/or scope of the requirements in line with the needs of its member companies and the level of available funding.