COMMISSIONING OF HEALTH SERVICES BY PRIMARY HEALTH NETWORKS (PHNS)

RESPONDING TO REQUEST FOR TENDERS / QUOTES / EOIS
COMMISSIONING OF HEALTH SERVICES

Australia’s 31 Primary Health Network’s (PHNs) major role is to work with local communities and local service providers in the strategic development of quality services to address local community needs.

As the PHNs must meet local needs, there will be considerable variation between the PHNs in terms of the types of services they will be seeking and how they want these services to be delivered. PHNs will require organisations and practices to tender for this work.

Writing tender applications will be new for many exercise professionals. This document provides some general advice and tips regarding responding to a PHN tender, quote or expression of interest (EOI). However, exercise professionals must ensure they meet the specific requirements of their respective PHN tender/quote/EOI. See also ESSA’s Policy Statement ‘Commissioning and accredited exercise physiology services’.

Getting Started

How do I find my local PHN’s tender opportunities or similar?
Most PHNs will operate an electronic procurement site (i.e. Tenderlink) on their website through which they will publish tenders, quotes and EOI opportunities. In most cases, you will need to register to use the site, which is generally free of charge. Once registered, you will be sent email notifications of tenders, quotes and EOI opportunities and can download the relevant documents and upload applications.

To apply or not to apply:
In considering whether to apply or not, consider the following:

- What are the mandatory requirements of the tender and can you meet them? (e.g. a minimum coverage for professional indemnity and public liability insurance; number of clients that will be required to be seen; required response time to referrals; accreditation requirements; clinical governance requirements; data entry requirements)
- Can you show relevant experience? What is your track record in working with this particular cohort or delivering the type of service that is the focus of the tender, quote or EOI?
- Who is the competition?
- Is the contract the right ‘size’ for your business and will it clash with any existing or upcoming work commitments for your practice?
- Consider what the terms of the contract would be if you were successful in the tender and whether your practice can meet them. What are the deliverables? What are the timelines? How will funding be provided? (e.g. block funding or by occasion of service)
- What is the profit potential and impact on the cash flow of the practice?
- What is your capacity to engage additional staff to meet the requirements of the tender?
- What are the risks for your business if you were successful in getting the tender? Can they be effectively managed?
Writing the application:
In writing an application for a tender, quote, or EOI, it is important you follow the process required by the PHN and get the application in, on or before the due date.

Being skilled in writing tender applications is only part of being successful – the application must be able to show that the practice provides a quality service supported by robust policies and strong clinical governance.

Do some background homework before you start writing the application:
This involves:

- Reading **ALL** of the documents relevant to the application! Ensure you download all documents and read them. Attend any information sessions offered by the PHN and go armed with questions.
- Your application should demonstrate an understanding of the contract and the needs of the PHN. Find out what they are looking for from an organisation. If you have any questions you can contact the PHN.
- Understand your patients, the population you serve, the strengths and expertise of your practice and identify potential partners so you can clearly articulate this in your application.
- Refer to your marketing strategy and prepare a short marketing plan tailored to your application. Your marketing plan will help define how you will market your business for this particular application. Use it to identify any key messages you will use in your application response and the information resources and reference material you will attach to the application. Decide on the two or three unique factors that will persuade the PHN that yours is the best proposal to meet their needs.
- Familiarise yourself with the Department of Health PHN website and the PHN grant programme guidelines. Keep an eye on the PHN website as it may be updated to reflect the evolution of the PHN Programme.
- Prepare or arrange your accountant to prepare copies of your organisation’s financial statements (including balance sheets and profit and loss accounts).
- The tender may ask for references and you should provide the names of referees relevant to the requirements of the application.

Writing the application:

- Use the provided template if there is one. Stick to the set word limit. If no set format for responding has been specified, follow the general format and numbering of the tender specification.
- Read the questions you are being asked and respond in full to each question.
- Do not assume the PHN has knowledge of your practice – spell it out.
- Use the same words/terms/language as the PHN and use data to show your understanding of the issue.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the required service/s and provide evidence of relevant, recent experience (usually not more than 3 years old). Provide specific examples of how you meet the selection criteria rather than simply stating that you do. Ensure your proposal is centred on explaining how your approach to delivering the tender will meet the PHNs needs, describing the benefits the PHN will receive from your products/services. Highlight anything that doesn’t cost you but is of high value. *(i.e. certain services that are already part of your service/organisation)*
• Demonstrate how you are going to evaluate success. What are your goals and measures?
• Communicate your strengths and how your strengths will benefit the PHN/project. Show also how you will mitigate risk.
• Demonstrate how your practice is well managed by showing project and risk management capability and competence. (i.e. return of benefits statement, project plan, and risk management plan) Also show that you are a financially stable, well run and efficient organisation by showing project funding plan/budget.
• Check if the questions are weighted for marks and answer accordingly, so questions with more weighting will require more detail.
• Make sure your document is well presented with no typographical errors; use plain language and avoid jargon. Your audience may not be a health professional.
• Critically appraise your application before submitting it; check you have answered all of the questions in the specific order asked and included all required attachments/supporting documentation.

Other Opportunities:
Many state and local governments have tendering opportunities and also grants that are open to private businesses.

Below are a few websites you can find tendering and grant opportunities:

• AusTender
• QTenders (Queensland)
• NSW eTendering (New South Wales)
• Tenders VIC (Victoria)
• SA Tenders & Contracts (South Australia)
• Tenders WA (Western Australia)
• Tasmanian Government Tenders (Tasmania)
• Shared Services Procurement (Australian Capital Territory)
• Quotations & Tenders Online (Northern Territory)
• Business.gov.au - Grants & Assistance Finder
• Business Queensland
• New South Wales Department of Industry
• South Australia Department of State Development
• Business Victoria
• Western Australia Small Business Development Corporation
• NT.gov.au
• Business Tasmania
• Innovate Canberra
• Australian Business Financing Centre
• Your local government website
• Foundations and Health organisations that are in your area of expertise.
• Ourcommunity.com.au
• Gambling organisations – are required to offer grants to communities

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