

External Audit Services

Invitation to Tender

**County Carlow Chamber of Commerce, Industry and
Tourism CLG**

Closing Date for Tender – 9th of September 2021

INTRODUCTION

County Carlow Chamber established in 1947, represents the interests of businesses, both large and small, in across the County and its environs. The Chamber is dedicated to fostering a thriving county and is a catalyst in the promotion and progression of the town, county and region. We support the economic and social development of County Carlow through our work with other stakeholders and businesses, our proactive approach to policy development, and our lobbying to impact decisions that benefit the region.

The services we provide are designed to match the needs of a wide range of businesses, regardless of business size or sector.

We keep members informed with regular business updates, providing advice, promoting business, and helping businesses to reach new goals. The Chamber is the voice of business in the County championing their concerns, celebrating success, and promoting Carlow.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

County Carlow Chamber of Commerce is a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) under the Companies Act 2014. The company number is 185839 and the address of the registered office is Gateway Business Centre, Athy Road, Carlow.

The County Carlow Chamber of Commerce is a Not-for-Profit Company, which holds a current valid Tax Clearance Certificate.

During 2020 County Carlow Chamber had staff of 1.2 and the Chamber is primarily funded through membership and a number of core events. In 2020 the Chamber like many other organisations was impacted by Covid and was restricted in some of the events it could host.

GOVERNANCE

The directors are responsible for the management of the business of the company and for exercising their powers in pursuit of the objects of the company. The directors are committed to maintaining the highest standard of Corporate Governance and they believe that this is a key element in ensuring the proper operation of the company's activities.

The Board is responsible for providing leadership, setting strategy, and ensuring control. There are currently 14 directors who are drawn from within the membership and bring their expertise and decision-making skills to the Board deliberations on a voluntary basis.

The company has a comprehensive process for reporting management information to the Board. The Board is provided with regular information for all aspects of the organisation.

To support their governance activities the Board has established a number of Committees, who report directly to the Board. Each Committee has its own terms of reference. The Committees of the Board are the Finance Committee, the Events Committee, the Business Continuity Committee, the Develop Carlow Town Committee, the Education and Skills Committee, the Grow Membership Committee and the Links to Local & National Government Committee.

Governance is also supported by an outsourced external audit function.

In accordance with the Articles of Association of the Chamber, the company hosts its Annual General Meeting and presents the audited accounts to members at this meeting. The board requests the audited accounts to be completed within the first quadrimestre to allow time to review and issue to members in advance of the AGM

Financial Statement Presentation

To ensure that adequate accounting records are kept in accordance with sections 281 to 285 of the Companies Act 2014, the directors have established appropriate books to adequately record the transactions of the company. The directors also ensure that the company retains the source documentation for these transactions. The accounting records are maintained at the company's office at Gateway Business Centre, Athy Road, Carlow.

INVITATION TO TENDER FOR EXTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE

The Board of County Carlow Chamber of Commerce has decided to invite tenders for the provision of external audit services with effect from 1st Jan 2020. This date coincides with the start of the annual audit cycle and the successful tenderer will undertake the **2022** audit and produce the Annual Financial Reports for the period **2021**.

County Carlow Chamber's objectives for this tender process are to:

1. Secure a high quality provider of external audit services.
2. Ensure the appointed supplier is in place in readiness for the review of the financial statements for the year to 31 December 2021.
3. Appoint a supplier who will provide high standards of professional service.
4. Appoint a supplier who will provide excellent value for money.
5. Work with an audit partner who will add value to our services.

QUERY HANDLING

Any queries relating to this process should be directed by email to the CEO of County Carlow Chamber who will endeavor to reply to all queries as soon as possible.
ceo@carlowchamber.com

Copies of prior year financial statements are available on request.

PROCESS OF EVALUATION

All submissions will be evaluated by County Carlow Chamber's Finance Committee and a short list of no more than three providers will be prepared. The short listed providers may be invited to provide supplementary information and clarification of their proposal before a final evaluation is conducted.

COST OF PREPARATION OF TENDER

County Carlow Chamber will not be liable for any costs incurred by Tenderers in the preparation of Tenders or any associated work effort. It is the responsibility of the Tenderer to ensure that they are fully aware and understand the requirements as laid down in the Request for Tenders Document. Tenderers will be responsible for any costs incurred by them in the event of them being required to attend clarification or other meetings.

FORMAT OF TENDERS

Tenders should be detailed and focused on the capacity of the Tenderer to fulfill the requirements that are outlined in this document. Tenderers are required to submit the information under the headings provided (1-12) informing their Tender in detail and in clear and unequivocal language. The proposal document should be no longer than 20 pages.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Economic and Financial Standing:

All Tenderers must demonstrate that they can meet the following financial and economic standing requirement(s). These are requirements must be met in full, and if the criterion is passed, have no further role in calculating the Tenderers overall score. If the Tenderer cannot meet the criteria, the Tenderer is eliminated from the competition.

Tenderers must confirm they will be able to provide evidence that they meet the minimum requirements set out in selection criteria below. It will only be in the event that a Tenderer is to be awarded the Contract that it will be required, as a condition of the award, to provide evidence that it satisfies these minimum requirements. At that point, they will be given five (5) working days to produce the relevant evidence.

Tenders will either pass or fail this qualification criterion.

Technical and Professional Ability

All Tenderers in order to provide high quality services of a similar nature to those sought herein must demonstrate that they have the following technical and professional ability and must furnish the following documentation with their Tenders. Tenderers will either pass or fail these qualification criteria.

Experience of Previous Contracts

Provide details of two (2) previous similar nature contracts,

Appropriate License

Tenderers must be a member of a Prescribed Accountancy Body that comes within the supervisory remit of the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IASSA) or recognised equivalent, which can lawfully provide the Services in Ireland.

AWARD CRITERIA

Only those Tenders who have qualified in accordance with Selection criteria will proceed to be evaluated under this paragraph Award criteria.

No commitment of any kind, contractual or otherwise shall exist unless and until a formal written contract has been executed by or on behalf of County Carlow Chamber. Any award of notification of preferred bidder status by the Chamber shall not give rise to any enforceable rights by the Tenderer. The County Carlo Chamber may cancel this public procurement competition at any time prior to a formal written contract being executed.

The contract will be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous Tender by applying the following criteria scored out of 1000 marks:

Award Criteria		Weighting	Max Marks	Minimum Scores=60 %
A.	<u>Quality and Balance of Proposed Resources</u> * External Audit Services 40%	40%	400	240
B.	<u>Quality of Proposed Methodology and Approach</u> * External Audit Services 30%	20%	200	180
C.	<u>Cost</u>	25%	250	N/A
D.	<u>Member of Chamber of Commerce</u>	15%	150	N/A
Total Maximum Score Available		100%	1000	

Failure to achieve the 60% of the score for criteria A and B will lead to elimination from the competition.

The award of a contract (if any) to the highest ranked Tenderer (as determined by award criteria) will be conditional upon:

Evaluation of Cost

Tenderers must provide full details of all applicable costs at their most competitive rates.

Points scored = (Value of the lowest cost valid Tender / cost of the Tender in question) x Maximum score achievable

Marking Methodology

Criteria A and B: Tenders should note that carrying out the assessment under criteria A and B the scoring mechanism outlined in below table will be used:

Weighting Range	Meaning
90-100	Excellent response with very few or no weaknesses that fully meets or exceeds requirements and provides a comprehensive, detailed and convincing assurance that the Tenderer will deliver to an excellent standard.
80-89	A very good response that demonstrates real understanding of the requirements and assurance that the Tenderer will deliver to a good or high standard.
60-79	A satisfactory response which demonstrates a reasonable understanding of requirements and gives reasonable assurance of

	delivery to an adequate standard but does not provide sufficiently convincing assurance to award a higher mark.
40-59	A response which elicits reservations and which have not been addressed by clarification. Lacks full credibility/convincing detail and that there is a significant risk that the response will not be successful.
20-39	A response which elicits serious reservations. This may be because, for example, insufficient detail is provided (even post clarification) and that the response has fundamental flaws, or is seriously inadequate or seriously lacks credibility with a high risk of non-delivery
0-19	Response completely fails to address the criterion under consideration.

Weighted scores for award criterion A & B will be calculated as per the below formula:

$$\text{Criterion Weighting} * (\text{Raw Score}/100) = \text{Score Awarded}$$

RESPONSE FORMAT

County Carlow Chamber wishes to receive sufficient information to evaluate your firm's proposal. However, please do not provide unnecessary or excessive information, as this will delay the evaluation process and may ultimately lead to your exclusion from evaluation.

1. Executive Summary

Please provide a brief summary of how your proposal best meets the requirements of County Carlow Chamber for External Audit Services

2. Supplier's Details

County Carlow Chamber requires an understanding of your commercial structure and specifically the legal entity with which it is entering into an arrangement for the provision of External Audit services

- Registered Firm name
- Trading name (if applicable)
- Type of firm ownership
- Firm structure
- National/International affiliations and nature of those relationships.
- Key Contact person's name
- Tax credit Certificate

3. Overall Approach to the External Audit

County Carlow Chamber wishes to understand your methodology and approach in undertaking an External Audit for a client like us-

- Please outline the External Audit Methodology that you would propose for this engagement, including indicative timetable
- Please outline the planning process that would be undertaken in the first year, and then for subsequent years.
- Please outline the major risks which would be the focus of your Audit work
- Please discuss how you will determine the question of materiality for the External Audit.
- Please discuss your approach to relying on and using information generated through the internal audit function.
- Please discuss how the External Audit will be controlled and coordinated, and define the expected interface processes with management.
- Please discuss the technology and tools you would propose to use as part of the Audit process.
- Please discuss your role and approach to the identification of fraudulent transactions in a not for profit organization.
- Discuss your approach to communication in relation to the planning phase,

issues and final reporting with Management, the Board Audit Committee and the Board.

- Please outline your approach to the preparation of the Financial Statements for County Carlow Chamber, including processes for Management and Board review, and Quality assurance.

4. Resourcing: Expertise and Stability of the Proposed Team Members

County Carlow Chamber wishes to assess the relevant experience and expertise of the proposed Audit Team members and the commitment of your firm to ensuring Team member continuity.

- Please outline the Team members who will be providing the External Audit, at each of the relevant levels; Lead Partner/Partner/Director/Senior Manager/Manager/Supervisor/Staff
- Please provide details of their professional qualifications, experience and expertise.
- Please outline the Team member roles with their anticipated hours/percentage of total effort for the External Audit
- Please discuss your commitment to ensuring continuity of Team members on the External Audit, and how knowledge and relationships will be retained.
- Please state if any part of the proposed services is to be subcontracted

5. Quality Assurance

County Carlow Chamber wishes to assess the quality assurance mechanisms for the processes of the External Audit.

- Please outline your internal Quality Assurance Processes.
- Please provide the details of your last external quality assurance review (Review Agency/ date), and a copy of any associated certification.
- Please outline your transition plan to commence as External Auditor.
- Please outline the processes you have in place to manage future conflicts of interest (perceived or actual) and how these decisions are communicated.

6. Financial Viability

County Carlow Chamber wishes to ensure that the External Auditor is financial viable.

- Are there any significant events, matters or circumstances which have arisen in the last 2 years which may significantly affect your firm's capacity to provide External Audit services.
- Are there any mergers/acquisitions in process, or which are imminent?
- Are there any proceedings, either actual or threatened against your firm, its parent, associated entities or any Partner/Director of the firm or have there been any such proceedings in the last five years? If so, what, if any,

- remedial action has been taken in respect of those actions.
- Are there any bankruptcy actions in process or outstanding against a Partner?

7. Accreditation and Insurance

County Carlow Chamber wishes to ensure that the External Auditor has the appropriate credentials and insurances to undertake the External Audit.

- Please confirm that your firm and the signing partners are listed as Registered Auditors?
- Please confirm that no staff which may undertake work on this External Audit have been disqualified/ censured under any legislation?
- Please provide an outline of the accreditations, registrations, certificates and licenses your firm holds that are relevant to the services required.
- Please provide a statement that your professional indemnity insurance complies with the minimum requirement of your Regulatory body.
- Please provide details of any limitations or exclusions in your professional indemnity insurance, including but not limited to failure of the team members to follow the firm's External Audit procedures or failure to follow the firm's Quality Assurance procedures.
- Please provide details of your insurance for Public Liability.

8. Engagement Process and Commercial Arrangements

County Carlow Chamber wishes to ensure that the proposed service represents value for money.

- Please provide a copy of your proposed engagement letter and proposed terms and conditions of the External Audit and related services.
- Please outline your proposed fee for:
- External Audit (including all planning, field work, office visits, reporting and meetings with staff, management and Board Audit Committee. Preparation of the Financial Statements for County Carlow Chamber.
- Assuming a three year contract, please outline your methodology for review of rates over the term of the contract.

9. Value Added Services and Innovation

County Carlow Chamber wishes to ensure that the External Audit process remains current.

- Please outline your approach to ensure that your External Audit procedures are updated to reflect changes in Accounting Standards and Industry Practices, Legislative and Regulatory changes.
- Please discuss your firms approach to innovation in relation to the External Audit, including but not limited to best practices, innovation in solutions, application of technologies that lead to improved value for money

10. Other Matters

Any other matters which have not been covered in previous sections that you believe need to be discussed or taken into consideration when your proposal is evaluated.

RETURN OF TENDER DOCUMENTS

The tender may be submitted via electronic copy to the County Carlow Chamber of Commerce on ceo@carlowchamber.com no later than the close of business 24th September 2021. Any expressions of interest received after that date will not be considered.

Following the selection process, those in the final list will be required to make a presentation to the audit committee.

Timelines:

Tender documents published:	12 th August 2021
Proposal to be received by County Carlow Chamber:	9 th September 2021
Presentation to audit committee:	Btwn 13 th and 17 th September '21
Sign-off by Board / contracts awarded:	By 8 th October 2021

Return to the following:

Email ceo@carlowchamber.com

Hard copies may be sent to:

The Finance Committee

c/o. Brian O'Farrell, CEO

County Carlow Chamber of Commerce

Gateway Business Centre, Athy Road

Carlow