



EXTERNAL AUDIT AND ACCOUNTANCY SERVICES

2023-2026

Issued by:

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ASCERT EXTERNAL AUDIT AND ACCOUNTANCY SERVICES

TENDER 2023-2026

ASCERT is in the process of renewing its provision for the supply of external audit and accountancy services and is providing you with the tender documents outlining its requirements as an invitation to tender to become its contracted supplier in this area.

ASCERT's Tender Evaluation Committee is made up of four members, including Finance Coordinator, Director of Finance and Corporate Services, CEO and a member of ASCERT's board of directors who will meet in July 2024 to consider proposals set before it.

For your guidance, notes and instructions for completion and submission of this tender are detailed below.

SECTION 1: Introduction

ASCERT started out in 1998 as Lisburn Drug and Alcohol Project (LDAP), as a community response to concerns about drug misuse in local areas of Lisburn. LDAP changed its name to Action on Substances through Community Education and Related Training (ASCERT), in 2000 and registered in 2004 as a company limited by guarantee.

Since 1998, ASCERT have grown to become one of the leading and best known providers of drug and alcohol services in Northern Ireland. It has developed an extensive experience of service development, planning and delivery across a range of disciplines and have secured and successfully delivered substantial contracts on behalf of public bodies. ASCERT now provides a wide range of services across the region, and has bases in Lisburn, Belfast and Omagh.

ASCERT is strongly linked to policy development and implementation of strategy at a regional and local level. ASCERT also has strong partnerships with other services delivering treatment, prevention, training and community services to people that need support the most.

ASCERT delivers a wide range of community-based services and supports, including many in partnership with other local community/voluntary sector organisations, directed towards children, young people, adults, communities, workforces and professionals.



ASCERT currently employ 44 staff. ASCERT are expected turnover of £2.57 million in the year ending March 25.

ASCERTs finance team consists of a Director of Finance and Corporate Services supported by a finance coordinator and finance and IT officer.

ASCERT plan to further develop their social enterprise activities in the next 12 months, possibly setting up a separate legal entity. ASCERT are also generate additional income through charitable fundraising and donations.

Action on Substances Through Community Education and Related Training (ASCERT), is a private company limited by guarantee, registered in Northern Ireland. Registered Office: 23 Bridge Street, Lisburn. BT28 1XZ. Company No: NI058832. It is also registered with the Charity Commission NI. Registration No: NIC101239.

Further information on ASCERT can be found at www.ascert.biz

SECTION 2: Summary of Requirements

What is Covered in The Contract:

ASCERT are requiring the provision of their annual external audit services over the 3- year period 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2026, but contract may be extended for a further 48 months on agreement by both parties.

We deem services to include:

- The planning, management and execution of the annual external audit.
- Preparation of annual audited Accounts.
- Liaison and co-ordination with the Finance Coordinator, Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Finance and IT officer and Finance & Personnel sub-committee to ensure a full and robust approach to the requirements of financial reporting standards, Companies Act 2006, the Charity Commission, governance, as well as risk identification and controls.
- Submission of annual accounts returns to Companies House.



- Consistent staff for the audit each year.

ASCERTs audited accounts for the period to 31st March 2023 have been attached for your information.

ASCERT also require you to provide further hourly/ daily rates breakdown, if applicable to the following services that ASCERT may or may not acquire from your company:

- Provision of advice on technical, accounting and finance matters including taxation.
- Other strategic advice where required.

Exclusions & Reservations:

ASCERT reserves the right to source other audit and accountancy support services outside the scope of annual external audit services from other providers.

SECTION 3: Submitting Your Tender

Any tender submission (including Annex A) should be sent electronically along with your general terms and conditions and any supporting documentation to:

Kelly Hull, (kelly@ascert.biz)

A signed Certificate Relating to Bona Fide Tender should be completed and returned at the same time (Annex A)

3.1. Date and Time of Return

Tenders must arrive no later than 3pm on Friday 21st June 2024.

ASCERT has a strict policy of not accepting tenders received late and you should take steps to ensure your tender is received on time. It should be clearly understood that unless an extension of time is granted by ASCERT, tenders received after the closing date given will not be considered.

3.2. Acceptance of Tender



ASCERT shall not necessarily accept the lowest priced tender. Evaluation and selection will be based purely on an assessment of price, an understanding of ASCERT's requirements and value for money. ASCERT reserve the right to accept all or any part of the tender.

3.3. What to Include in Your Tender Documentation

It is suggested that alongside Annex A (Certificate Relating to Bona Fide Tender), that tenderers include the following information in their submission to aid evaluation.

- How you propose to implement all aspects of the service required as stated in section 2.
- A clear detailed breakdown of costs (inclusive of vat).
- A list of previous/current clients and/or client testimonials to demonstrate an experience of delivering similar services to a satisfactory standard.
- Details of 2 references from similar third sector organisations who can be contacted as part of the tender process where required.
- Details of key staff who would be associated to servicing this contract (including qualifications, professional experience and/or CV).

3.4. Freedom of Information Act

Although ASCERT is not a public body, tenderers should be aware that the information provided in the completed tender and contractual documents could be disclosed in response to a valid request under the Freedom of Information Act. We will proceed on the basis of disclosure unless an appropriate exemption applies.

No information provided by the Tenderers will be accepted in total confidence and ASCERT accepts no liability for loss as a result of any information disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

ASCERT has no discretion whether or not to disclose information in response to a valid request under the Freedom of Information Act, unless an exemption applies. Disclosure decisions will be taken by appropriate individuals within ASCERT having due regard to the terms of the relevant legislation, exemptions, information may still be disclosed in the public interest if its highlight information that is included in the tender documents. Tenderers who view such information to be commercially sensitive or confidential in nature should state their



precise reasons as to why this view is taken. In particular, information containing trade secrets and commercial sensitivity should be highlighted by the Tenderer. Tenderers are advised against recording unnecessary information. The decision whether or not to disclose information rests solely with ASCERT who would consult with Tenderers, where it is considered appropriate, in relation to the release of controversial information. Tenderers will be notified by ASCERT of any disclosure request relating to them.

3.5. Confidentiality During & Beyond the Tender Process

Tenderers shall agree to hold in confidence and all times keep secret the affairs and concerns of ASCERT. Once tender documents have been issued, no attempt should be made by any representative of the tenderer organisation to engage with any ASCERT representative until the tender evaluation process is completed and all parties have been officially informed of the outcome. Any attempt to make such contact or influence in any way the evaluation process will render a tenderer's submission as invalid and they will be disqualified from the tendering process.

ASCERT will expect the new chosen supplier to enter into a data processing agreement.

3.6. Queries Relating to Tender Submission

Should a query be made in relation to this tender opportunity, the response will be shared with all prospective tenderers. Such queries should be addressed via email to:

Kelly Hull. Finance Coordinator. Email: kelly@ascert.biz

SECTION 4: Evaluation of Tenders

4.1. Elimination of Tender

Tenders may be eliminated if:

- (a) Tenderers fail to comply with these instructions to tender
- (b) Tenderers have in the opinion of the Board of Trustees, a history of poor quality work performance with the Board of Trustees.

4.2. Tender Evaluation Criteria and Scoring



The tender evaluation criteria will look at all relevant factors to be considered. Normally the award of the tender will be the best proposal that evidences 'best value' to ASCERT in terms of price, an understanding of ASCERT's requirements and value for money.

Tenders will be evaluated across three dimensions with weighted scoring applied as follows:

Criteria	Scoring
Price All prices throughout the tender should be stated inclusive of vat.	35%
An understanding of ASCERT's Requirements	35%
Value for money VfM is defined as the optimum balance between how effectively the proposal will deliver the service (quality) and the cost of the service (price).	30%

Should no clear single highest scorer be identified, ASCERT reserves the right to introduce a second round evaluation process.

4.4. Notification of Outcome

Tenders will be evaluated by members of ASCERT's evaluation panel using the scoring criteria detailed. All those who submit a proposal will receive notification of the outcome of the tender within four weeks of the tender closing date along with basic summary information relating to a ranking of their overall proposal compared to others submitted (not including any specific pricing information). Any Tenderer not agreeing to this, should say so at time of tender submission.



ANNEX A

CERTIFICATE RELATING TO BONA FIDE TENDER

1. The essence of tendering is that the Client shall receive bona fide, competitive tenders from all firms tendering. In recognition of this principle, we certify that this is a bona fide tender intended to be competitive, and that we have not fixed or adjusted the amount of the tender by, or under, or in accordance with, any agreement or arrangement with any other person.

2. We also certify that we have not:-
 - (a) Communicated to a person other than the person calling for these tenders, the approximate amount of the proposed tender.
 - (b) Entered into any agreement with any other person that shall refrain from tendering or as to the amount of the tender to be submitted.
 - (c) Offered or paid, or given or agreed to pay or give any sum of money or valuable consideration, directly or indirectly, to any person for doing, or having done, or causing, or having caused to be done, in relation to any other tender or proposed tender, for the said work, any act or thing of the sort described above.

3. We undertake that we will not do any of the acts mentioned in paragraphs 2(a), 2(b) or 2(c) above at any time before the date and hour specified for the return of this tender.

4. In this certificate the word 'person' includes any persons and any body or association, corporate or incorporated and 'any agreement or arrangement' includes any such transaction, formal or informal, and whether legally binding or not.

SIGNED BY THE TENDERER:

FOR AND BEHALF OF:

DATE:
