

EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS UNIT

The tendering & commissioning process: results from survey of contractors and consultation workshop

Contractors and potential contractors drawn from the EIU's contacts database were approached in October 2002 to take part in a survey on the EIU's practices in tendering and commissioning research contracts. Following this, a workshop was held in November 2002 at the EIU's Research Dissemination Conference, on tendering and commissioning research work. The key findings from the survey and workshop are outlined below.

Effective dissemination

- The majority of respondents to the survey had been sent information on the EIU research programme by EIU and/or looked at the website
- Other routes included word of mouth / SDF bulletin
- Many other dissemination routes were suggested - mainly electronic

Dissemination routes of other research commissioners

- Respondents to the survey were asked about the dissemination routes used by other research commissioners; responses included the following:
 - Mailing lists/email alerts e.g. Jiscmail, EWODOR
 - Other websites e.g. HEBSWEB, JRF
 - Journals
 - Newspaper ads
 - University research offices

Suggestions on how to disseminate more widely

- Survey respondents and workshop participants made the following suggestions:
 - Greater use of existing mailing lists
 - Creation of new internet newsgroup
 - More extensive use of existing websites
 - Circulation to university research offices
 - Circulation to NHS Trust managers
 - Circulation to DATs

The tendering process

- Most survey respondents had submitted at least 1 expression of interest/tender
- Just under half had attended a pre-tender meeting
- Comments included...
 - Clearer timescales in work programme would be useful
 - More time needed between call & deadline
 - Opinions divided on openness - between complimentary & request to know about 'referees & their credentials'
 - .. but overall opinions were very positive!

Research specifications

- All of the survey respondents who had received research specifications rated them as 'excellent' or 'good' in terms of:
 - Clarity
 - Background information provided
 - Timetable

Pre-tender meetings

- Generally seen as 'very' or 'fairly' successful in improving communication between EIU / stakeholders and potential contractors
- Opinions slightly more divided on improvement of communication with other contractors re: collaboration
- Most felt that pre-tender meetings had helped to improve the quality of tender submitted

The research competition

- Guidance for the competition was generally felt to be clear and helpful
- Comments included: more time needed for responses, could be more significant part of research programme / run more often
- Generally very well received