

Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Strategy

Invitation to submit a tender:
To develop an ESG Strategy and
Implementation Plan for Respond.

Closing Date for submissions is by 1pm
on 24th April 2024.

For further information contact:

Reyhana Cushnan

Policy Manager

E: reyhana.cushnan@respond.ie

**building
homes,
improving
lives.**
respond.ie



Contents

1. Invitation to tender	3
2. About Respond.....	3
3. Developing the ESG Strategy and Implementation plan for Respond	3
5. Management of the contract.....	4
6. Reporting and outputs	4
7. Format of tenders	5
8. Requests for further information or clarification	6
9. Terms and conditions	6
10. Submission of tenders	7
11. Assessment of tenders and selection	7

1. Invitation to tender

Respond wishes to contract a consultant, or organisation to develop an organisation wide Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Strategy and Implementation Plan. As a construction led Approved Housing Body (AHB) and service provider, we are keen to understand our impact in relation to ESG practices. Our activities are wide ranging from capital investments in building homes; placemaking and communities; undertaking planned works to invest in the maintenance and management of our homes and community buildings; to delivering community based services. We are keen to implement an organisation-wide strategy / programme that both fulfils our statutory and regulatory obligations as well as, takes us on a journey of improvement by setting ambitious yet achievable goals over 3-5 years.

This is an open invitation to tender, seeking applications from suitably qualified individuals, teams and partnerships who can bring their expertise, skills and experience in the field of ESG and strategic business planning and a proven track record of developing similar ESG programmes and implementation plans for businesses. You must demonstrate how you will tailor your approach to Respond's specific, yet wide ranging business activities of delivering social and affordable housing and services across a range of sectors as outlined below.

2. About Respond

Respond, an Approved Housing Body (AHB) and service provider, has been working all around Ireland for over 40 years. Our vision is that every family and individual in Ireland will have high-quality housing as part of a vibrant and caring community. Housing and decent accommodation, in the areas where people want to live, are central to improving people's lives and enhancing the health and well-being of society. Our guiding principles; a human right to housing and; social justice, underpin our approach to delivering this vision.

17,008 tenants live in 7,761 homes across the 26 counties that we either own or manage. Respond also provide a range of services for families and individuals within our communities. This includes emergency accommodation with 24/7 support for families who are homeless in six Family Homeless Services, three Day Care Services for Older People, 15 Early Learning and School Aged Care (ELSAC), Family Support and Refugee Resettlement services. Our aim is to provide person centred services to support people to achieve their goals and reach their full potential.

3. Developing the ESG Strategy and Implementation Plan for Respond

Respond provides 'homes for life' and we are committed to ensuring that we continue to meet the needs of both our current and future tenants and service users and fulfil our vision and social purpose of providing high quality housing and services in vibrant and caring communities. We are mindful that as a housing and service provider, our impact on communities can be long lasting and significant and as a learning organisation with a clear social purpose, we are also keen to ensure that our practices are undertaken in a sustainable and responsible manner.

We recognise that implementing an ESG programme is becoming an intrinsic business imperative along with it becoming a standard expectation of general reporting standards and requirements of companies and organisations. As well as fulfilling our legal and statutory obligations, we are also looking to the future and want to implement an ESG programme that will establish realistic but ambitious goals that support Respond's future growth, as set out in our current Strategic Plan to 2024.

Key requirements of this tender will include, but are not be limited to:

Analysis

- An examination of the current and projected legal and statutory requirements in relation to ESG performance and reporting as applicable to Respond.
- Alignment of the ESG strategic approach with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals Framework.
- Analysis of evidence and literature on international best practice in delivering ESG programmes by other

social housing and service providers.¹

Identification and review

- Identification and assessment of Respond's current performance across all organisational activities from capital investments to placemaking and delivering community services.
- Identify an evidence based methodology to prioritise the areas that need development and improvement providing logical justifications for investments and inputs required for each area.
- Identify ESG risk and suggest mitigations.
- Development and analysis of benchmarking data to highlight what our comparators are doing to create sustainable business practices.
- A focus and analysis of our Corporate Social Responsibility offer in relation to ESG and any linkages.

Tenant, service users and staff engagement

- Outline a methodology for undertaking consultation with tenants, service users and staff to ensure their views are incorporated into the development of the Strategy and to ensure a continued role in the roll-out of the Implementation Plan.

Outputs

- Development of SMART objectives and KPIs to demonstrate measurable impact and distance travelled.
- Goals should include the legal and regulatory obligations and reporting requirements for the sectors we operate in and those we sub-contract and be supported by relevant guidelines on what is required².
- Exploration of the linkages to the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) which arises from the European Green Deal's climate change action objectives, to further enhance the disclosure by companies on climate and environmental data.
- Training and dissemination activities should be included within the Implementation Plan.
- The Implementation Plan should make clear recommendations on the systems and structures e.g. internal groups, roles and responsibilities required to implement an ambitious ESG programme across a large multifaceted organisation.

5. Management of the contract

A Respond Advisory Group (RAG) will oversee the strategy development process. The group's role will involve discussing and approving aspects of the project design and instruments, as well as advising and supporting the appointed team to undertake tasks that involve Respond staff, tenants and service users. It will also advise on the all aspects of the developing proposals for implementation as appropriate. Membership of the RAG may include key members of Respond staff, subject matter experts and Board member/s. Day-to-day management of the contract will be led by Respond's Policy Manager who will also act as the key contact person. It is envisaged that our ESG Strategy and Implementation Plan will involve a cross departmental multi annual programme of work.

6. Reporting and outputs

The appointee/s will be required to submit regular progress reports and to attend review meetings with the Respond Advisory Group. In addition, the final outputs will include, a detailed report of the methodology, process and findings covering:

- A report outlining the methodology used to undertake this work and a summary of the background information, analysis and findings used to inform and develop the final ESG strategy/programme and implementation plan (referring to the areas as detailed in section 3 above).

¹ For example, the Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing developed by The Good Economy in the UK. This should identify the resources and specific circumstances that made these programmes successful and their relative applicability to Respond considering our current business and operating context.

² For example guidance on oversight and monitoring of ESG compliance and how to implement a compliance monitoring programme.

- A bespoke ESG strategy/programme for Respond. As stated earlier, successful applications will bring subject matter expertise to this tender and we are looking for innovative and tailored proposals. However as a guideline, we would expect the final strategy to cover many of the following areas and /or clear rationale provided for applying an alternative approach:
 - Stakeholder analysis and engagement - identifying key partners and outlining the process of engagement and incorporating their feedback on ESG matters.
 - Clearly developed ESG goals and objectives for Respond over the short, medium and longer term.
 - Materiality assessment that identifies and prioritises the ESG issues that are most relevant and impactful to Respond's business.
 - Governance and accountability including an outline of the governance structure for ESG within Respond including, roles and responsibilities and reporting structures and communication channels.
 - Risk assessment outlining the risks and opportunities for Respond.
 - Performance metrics including KPIs to measure progress and distance travelled to achieving ESG goals.
 - Integration into business operations, tracking how ESG considerations will become part of the day-to-day activities at Respond.
 - Supply chain and vendor considerations along with ESG investment and financing issues.
 - Compliance and regulatory considerations.
 - Indicative resources and budget required to implement the strategy.
- A Strategy Implementation Plan including:
 - Training and awareness activities.
 - The planned initiatives to be implemented to address ESG issues at Respond.
 - Identifying responsibilities and timescales for delivery.

7. Format of tenders

Applicants should submit a tender document which addresses the points listed below in the order given. The tender document should be no more than 3,000 words (excluding CVs and references, which should be added as appendices). Please find the information headings to be addressed in the tender document below.

General information

- Name, address, telephone number and e-mail address of the applicant, identifying who will be the principal / day to contact as appropriate.
- Name, address, telephone number and e-mail address of any third parties, partners or collaborators involved in the tender, along with a description of their role or the element of the contract that they will fulfil.
- Confirmation of acceptance by the applicant and any third parties of the conditions of the tendering process as set out.
- A copy of the applicant's Tax Clearance Certificate, or, in the case of a non-resident applicant, a statement from the Revenue Commissioners confirming suitability on tax grounds.
- A copy of the applicants Insurance Cover, including employer's liability cover as appropriate.

Previous relevant experience and expertise

- Outline of the qualifications and relevant professional experience of each member of the evaluation team. Please add a summary CV of each member of the team, as an appendix to the tender document. Each CV must not exceed two A4 pages.
- In particular, please describe how the team's expertise and competencies relate to the area of work described in the tender, substantiated with evidence such as, case studies and examples of previous ESG Strategies and Implementation Plans developed for similar housing/community services /social businesses, if possible.
- Provide evidence to demonstrate the team's knowledge of current relevant national and

international policy and practice and/or methods of acquiring these.

- Outline your understanding of data protection legislation including storing sensitive information, responding to data access requests, sharing of information etc.

Methodology

Outline how the project will be undertaken. This should start with an overview of your proposed approach covering the following areas:

- The proposed elements/areas of investigation/examination that will be included in the final ESG Strategy and Implementation Plan including the approach for consultation with tenants, service users and staff.
- Methods to be used to develop your proposal and investigate each element.
- Approach to identifying and consulting key stakeholders and experts.
- Nature and types of information and data to be gathered.
- Specific approaches and tools to be used to gather information and data and ensure it is robust.
- Methods used for analysis of information and data.
- Your approach to ensuring high ethical standards are applied before, during and after the project duration.

Project Management and Timelines

State the overall project timelines, outlining the key milestones and actions to be undertaken and the calendar / timeframe for each.

Schedule of costs

- Quote costs in euro (€).
- The indicative budget is €50,000 inclusive of VAT.
- The budget must show the total costs of the research project, including VAT, any expenditure to third parties, collaborators or subcontractors.
- Use the following as main headings for the breakdown of costs, subdivided as required.
 - Salaries (include details for each person involved and note their role or position in relation to the project).
 - Data collection and processing costs, including IT.
 - Administration (explain the basis of apportionment of costs).
 - Overheads (give details of cost headings for overheads, and explain the basis of apportionment of costs).
 - Other costs appropriate to a project of this nature (which must be specified and defined).

8. Requests for further information or clarification

Requests for further information or clarification of any aspect of this process or expectations for this evaluation can be made by email to: reyhana.cushnan@respond.ie. To ensure equitable treatment of prospective tenderers, where such additional information or clarification is provided, Respond will seek to make relevant information available to all. Therefore, please provide a contact email address with your tender to facilitate this information-sharing.

9. Terms and conditions

Ownership

Respond will remain the sole owners of all end-products including, but not limited to, research data, reports, manuals or other documentation, programmes, information, etc., irrespective of whether or not the project is completed. The contractor's work shall be acknowledged by Respond in materials produced and disseminated on the basis of work completed under this contract.

Proposals for scholarly/academic publishing under the name(s) of the researcher(s) arising from this

tender can be discussed with Respond, as owners of the data and other products, and are subject to prior approval in writing from Respond.

Conflict of interest

Any registered interest involving the contractor and Respond, their staff or relatives must be fully disclosed in the response to this Invitation to Tender, or should be communicated to Respond immediately upon such information becoming known to the contractor. In any case, such information must be made available prior to the award of the contract. The terms "Registered Interest" and "Relative" shall be interpreted as per Section 2 of the *Ethics in Public Office Act 1995*. Failure to disclose a conflict of interest may disqualify a tenderer or invalidate an award of contract, depending on when the conflict of interest comes to light.

Garda clearance

All personnel who may be required to work directly with children and families for any aspect of this project will be subject to Garda clearance. If any such personnel has been living or working outside Ireland in the past three years, Respond may also require equivalent clearance.

Freedom of information

Information supplied in respect of this tender may be disclosed by Respond under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act, unless it is exempt from Disclosure under that Act (e.g. personal information or commercially sensitive information where the public interest in non-disclosure outweighs the public interest in disclosure). Tenderers are invited to indicate if they consider any information supplied to be sensitive. Under Section 29 of the Act, any tenderer must be consulted by Respond before any decision to disclose such information.

Changes to invitation to tender

Respond reserves the right to update or alter the information contained in this document at any time, but not later than seven days before the closing date for the receipt of tenders. Participating tenderers will be informed as the need arises.

There is no obligation on Respond to accept the lowest cost or any tender, and it may be decided, following the review of the tenders, not to proceed or to proceed with a new invitation to tender or an amended version of the proposed research.

10. Submission of tenders

Tenders should be submitted by email attachment as a single PDF or Microsoft Word document (with researcher CVs as appendices) to: reyhanacushnan@respond.ie Receipt of tenders will be acknowledged. **The closing date for receipt of completed tenders is 1pm, on 24th April 2024.** Incomplete tenders, tenders that do not follow the format prescribed above, or tenders received after the closing date will not be considered.

11. Assessment of tenders and selection

All tenders will be evaluated against set criteria as outlined below. Respond in its commitment to quality and value for money will evaluate tender submissions on a cost/ quality basis, with 30% being awarded for cost and 70% for quality. There will be a minimum threshold score of 35 marks for quality. All submissions below this level will be automatically excluded.

- Overall alignment with research brief and relevant experience and expertise. (15 marks).
- Methodology. (20 marks).
- Knowledge and experience of the subject area. (10 marks.)
- Timeframe and evidence of ability to meet deadlines. (10 marks).
- Budget, taking into account our commitment to value for money. (30 marks).
- Capacity for project management, administration, and to develop and maintain relationships with the various stakeholders. (5 marks).

- Ethics and ethos. (10 marks).

Respond reserves the right to seek additional information and/or interview tenderers in connection with its assessment of their tenders. It is anticipated that a number of tenderers will be shortlisted for interview.

The lead contact person and other key members of the research team should be available to attend the interview. Respond will not be held liable for any costs incurred by tenderers in relation to the tender submission or the assessment/interview process.

Respond reserves the right not to award the contract in the event that no tender is found to be suitable.

Please note we are not able to provide feedback on tender submissions as this is not always practical due to the volume of applications received.