

Highways engineering research

- 1** At its July 2009 meeting, UKRLG agreed that it should act as a 'strategic hub' for research. The DfT was tasked to develop a specification for this role.
- 2** The attached specification has been developed by Atkins as a follow-up to their previous work for UKRLG on this topic. It is based on the assumption that much of the work in acting as a dissemination hub would not be taken by UKRLG or board members themselves, but by others on their behalf. There will be, however, a key active role for the Group, to ensure that the research identified is relevant to those delivering a highway service.

Issues for UKRLG

- 3** The fact that the spec has been prepared by Atkins does not presuppose that they will undertake the work (they were specifically asked not to make this assumption in drawing it up). Indeed, there need be no presumption that commercial engineering consultants would necessarily be the most appropriate bodies to tender for this work. The Department is considering whether a limited competitive tender would be the most appropriate way to identify an appropriate organisation.
- 4** Is UKRLG content for services to be procured against the attached spec?

DfT/RLMP
November 2009

The Dissemination of Highways Engineering Research in the UK

Specification for consultancy services

Introduction

1. The UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG) and its Boards manages a programme of research (managed by the Department for Transport) in areas of engineering and maintenance management of interest to highways engineers (particularly those in local authorities). This programme has in the past included a wide range of topics, from maintenance management to an analysis of the relationship between street lighting and accidents.

2. The UKRLG's business plan states that its role is:

'to be a source of advice on the development of highways engineering and maintenance policy to national governments, local authorities and professional bodies across the UK on best practice and priorities for research within the wider transport picture.'

3. The accompanying overall priority is:

'commissioning and dissemination of research which furthers the effective and efficient delivery of highway maintenance'.

Background

4. The UKRLG is aware that it is only one of a number of research commissioning bodies. In January 2009, as part of its wider remit to provide practitioners across the UK with comment, guidance, and advice on strategic policy and highways management issues, the Department for Transport, on behalf of the UKRLG, commissioned a consultant to deliver a broad based review of highways engineering research. The objective of the study was to gain an overview of the scope of highways-related research, who is conducting it, and the processes adopted by them to formulate and manage these research programmes.

5. The consultant's report was presented to the UKRLG in March 2009. The report identified a number of strategies that could be utilised by the UKRLG to maximise the value of research funding and/or to improve the applicability of its research programme to the activities of key stakeholders. The strategies included:

- exploit existing research management structures
- increase involvement in technology transfer (especially with academia)

- publish and disseminate quarterly newsletters
 - produce an annual review of research activities
 - carry out ad-hoc reviews focussing on specific research topics
6. The consultant was subsequently commissioned to author a short paper detailing how the UKRLG may further develop its role as a generator, an enabler, and a disseminator of highways engineering research within the UK.
7. Following consideration of the report and short paper, the UKRLG has decided to appoint an external organisation to improve the ongoing dissemination of research to its members. The purpose of this Specification is to set out the scope for this appointment.

The objective of the project

8. The objective of this project is to develop the UKRLG's role as a disseminator of highways engineering related research by implementing the key recommendations from the previous study. It is envisaged that the work will be carried out as three tasks.

Task 1 – Review of Current Dissemination Methods

9. Dissemination of UKRLG research findings is currently undertaken via a combination of online documents, conference presentations, press releases and hard copy documents.
10. Task 1 will include a review of the current dissemination methods utilised by the UKRLG in order to identify areas for improvement which may include:
- creating periodic newsletters for email (and online) distribution
 - undertaking quarterly and annual reviews of highways related research
 - undertaking ad-hoc reviews of specific research topics
 - publishing articles and papers supported by conference presentations
 - the maintenance of the UKRLG research website
 - the development of a communication strategy for the dissemination of research
11. The task will include a review of the examples of good practice seen elsewhere within the UK, such as the work currently being undertaken to upgrade the Highways Agency's Research Compendium.
12. Task 1 will also include a review of the UKRLG's existing website as this portal could provide an ideal platform for the effective dissemination of research findings. It currently hosts information

relating to the four Boards and also contains the UKRLG's Codes of Practice. A review of the functionality of the existing UKRLG website would need to be undertaken and key areas for improvement/upgrade identified.

13. The output from Task 1 will be a short report containing recommendations on the way forward for acceptance by the Department's Project Officer.

Task 2 – Development of a Communication Strategy and a Website Specification

14. Task 2 is expected to include the preparation a communication strategy for the dissemination of research, and a specification for an updated research section on the UKRLG's website. The strategy and the specification will take account of the findings of Task 1.
15. The development and ongoing maintenance of the website will be undertaken by the IHT. However, the winning tenderer will be expected to provide support to the IHT in advising on the contents of the new website, which is to be determined by taking account of the findings of Task 1.
16. Task 2 will also include the preparation of the initial content for the new website which is expected to contain, as a minimum, the core information required to populate the website including details of current projects in progress using a pre-agreed template for project leaders to complete.
17. It is expected that the UKRLG will be provided with information regarding the browsing behaviour of visitors to the website. This will enable the identification of the most popular pages, most popular entry and exit points, and the identification of trends which can be used to further enhance the layout and content of the website.
18. Consideration will also need to be given to ensuring that the online content satisfies the appropriate level of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, and delivers content satisfying the requirements of The UK Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Task 3 – Maintenance of Research Dissemination

19. Task 3 will be to:
 - maintain the core content of the website in conjunction with the IHT.
 - prepare quarterly downloadable reviews of highways engineering research.
 - prepare an annual review of highways engineering research
20. The quarterly reviews will build upon the 2009 report entitled 'Highways Engineering Research – A Review of Processes, Players,

Budgets and Themes. The reviews will aim to provide members with answers to the following questions:

- Who is commissioning and funding research?
- Why is the research being commissioned and what outcomes is it seeking to achieve?
- What research is currently underway, planned or has been completed?
- Where can members find out further information about the research?
- How can members influence research being undertaken and who should they contact with ideas for new research?
- How are the results of the research being disseminated and used in practice? (e.g. Have new standards and guidance notes been produced as a result of the research?)

21. The Annual Review will effectively be a compilation of the four quarterly reviews together with an additional annual summary of the previous year together with a look forward to the next year.

Limitations of the Scope

22. The project will not cover:

- the review of specific research topics
- the presentation and publication of papers
- The implementation of the communication strategy (other than the development of the content for the website).

23. These are items which may be recommended as part of Task 1 but which would be let as separate tasks should they be required.

Outputs and timescales

24. It is anticipated that this project will initially last for four years and three months commencing in January 2010 and ending in March 2014. Tenderers should map out how they see the balance of time between the different tasks.

25. The deliverables from the project will be:

- The report from Task 1
- The communication strategy, website specification and initial website content (Task 2)
- A series of four quarterly reviews, and other updated website content, as defined in Task 3.

Matters to include in tender

26. Proposals should include:

- an appreciation of the project, demonstrating the tenderer's understanding of the brief
- an awareness of the areas of activity of the UKRLG and their target audience
- an explanation of how the tenderer would deliver the project objectives, with a clear rationale/justification for the proposed approach
- details of any proposed sub-contracts, including reasons for selection
- any anticipated difficulties in fulfilling the project brief and suggestions for addressing these
- any foreseen lengths of time during the project period when members of the project team would be unavailable due to leave or other commitments
- any specific project management methods needed to ensure that the project keeps to timescale
- proposals to ensure continuity of service during modifications to the website

27. The project should be tendered on a firm price basis. Proposals should show clearly the tasks to be carried out by each named individual, together with their associated time, daily rate and CV. They should also demonstrate the proposed team's experience of both individually and corporately of civil engineering research.

Project Management

28. The consultant shall attend progress meetings (typically in London) with the project manager to agree progress and to set objectives and deadlines as necessary to complete the project to timetable. The consultant will write up and circulate a note of such meetings within five working days.

29. The Department's designated project officer is:

Edward Bunting
 Local Transport Major Projects (5)
 Department for Transport
 Zone 3/14
 Great Minster House
 76 Marsham Street
 London
 SW1P 4 DR
 Tel: 020 7944 2402
 Fax: 020 7944 2195
 E-mail: edward.bunting@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Payment of Invoices

30. Invoices should be submitted monthly. Invoices should provide a breakdown of work carried out, by staff and time.

Assessment Criteria

31. The following quality criteria will be used in assessing the tenders:

- understanding of, and quality of the proposed approach to, the brief (30%)
- relevant previous experience and track record of those assigned to the project (30%)
- demonstration of project management skills and ability to deliver to project timescales (10%)

32. The remaining 30% of assessment score will be assigned to value for money (price relative to lowest bid).

33. For their own benefit, it is essential that tenderers address the above points clearly within their tenders.

October 2009