NHS England

IDCR Commercial Toolkit: e-Prescribing Requirements and Supply Engagement

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IDCR Commercial Toolkit

e-Prescribing Requirements and Supply Engagement

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1 Executive summary

NHS England is developing an “IDCR Commercial Toolkit” to support organisations which are applying to the Integrated Digital Care Fund. The ambition of this work is to improve quality and consistency through supporting the effective delivery of projects funded by the Integrated Digital Care Fund. The IDCR Commercial Toolkit is being developed on a phased basis, to directly support the application and assessment process. NHS England will continue adding guidance and documentation based upon the specific needs and requests of those organisations which apply to the Fund.

In the longer term it is intended that the IDCR Commercial Toolkit will:

- collate existing best practice commercial and procurement guidance and reference material, ensuring it is up to date and fit for purpose;
- make useful information and documentation accessible and easy to use;
- through “peer assist” tools and networks improve cross-working and information sharing;
- identify gaps where new guidance is required, by consulting with Applicants to the Integrated Digital Care Fund to create the necessary commercial resources required

This document “ePrescribing: Requirements and Supply Engagement” forms part of the IDCR Commercial Toolkit and is a brief guidance document intended to assist NHS organisations which are considering procurement of an ePrescribing solution.

If you have any questions or feedback about this document (or the IDCR Commercial Toolkit generally) please email: england.nhstechfund@nhs.net

2 What are requirements?

Your requirements document will be key to ensuring that you procure the right system. It is also referred to as a "specification" or "tender specification". The requirements document is used to identify and communicate what you need a system to do. It will usually be formally issued as part of your tender documents within the procurement process to enable potential suppliers to understand and respond to your needs, and it will then form a core part of any subsequent contract. Requirements can be simple or detailed, but should focus on clearly outlining your needs in a way that suppliers can understand.

It is necessary to use your requirements document to clearly describe what you require. However, there is a balance to strike with ensuring that interested suppliers can then respond flexibly enough to allow you to fully understand what their particular system does. Long, complex, mandatory requirements that contain multiple components are difficult for suppliers to respond to and tend to limit the way in which a supplier can respond. This may then result in credible suppliers being eliminated from your procurement process.

3 Things to consider when preparing your requirements:

- Think about how you will evaluate the returns that you receive from suppliers; by law you must tell the suppliers how you are going to evaluate their responses. You must identify how will you score their information and what you will you be looking for. Good requirements documents clearly articulate both requirements and scoring mechanisms and are generally much easier to evaluate.

- Do your homework and make sure that you understand the market before you put pen to paper. Pre-market engagement is an essential part of understanding what the market has to offer, and how it may work for your particular needs and environment. Make sure you know what is available in the current market and be realistic and what you then put "in scope" for your own system. Aspirational requirements which are not able to be met by current suppliers are likely to result in poor response from the market during procurement. An alternative is to include within your requirements potential future requirements and then a supplier can confirm in its response whether that is already in scope within its own technology development plan and/or how long it might take to bring that functionality to market. It is good practice to share draft requirements with the market before going to tender so you can gauge and get feedback from the market.

- Engage with a subject matter expert who understands the market. Once you have a draft of your requirements, which describe your system. run it past someone who understands the market to confirm that you are not likely to run into areas of difficulty. Using gateway requirements (for example specific pass/fail requirements)[1] can reduce the number of returns from suppliers and

[1] An example of a gateway requirement may be to specify that inpatient prescribing must be supported. If this is not available from a given supplier's solution, then that supplier cannot

this may be helpful if you consider that there are specific systems that will not meet your need.

- Seek out and use existing requirements documents as a start point, but proceed with caution. Of course, it is very helpful to have an existing requirements set to use but you must make sure it is then tailored specifically for your own use and need. For example, the functional specification published by NHS Connecting for Health can be used as a starting point but it should be borne in mind that this document contains functional areas that remain aspirational despite its being over 5 years old. [2]There is no system currently on the market that will deliver everything outlined in that document. Other requirements documents can be found on the ePrescribing Toolkit website for your reference (www.eprescribingtoolkit.com).

- Talk to other NHS organisations about the systems they use, what works well and what doesn't work so well, and what they have learnt from the procurement, implementation and adoption of their own systems. This will help you to get a better understanding of what you need (or don't need) your own system to do and why.

- Be clear about aspirations and what you would like to achieve (particularly in terms of outcomes) from the system you procure.

- Link your requirements to your evaluation: this will allow you to ensure that you select the system and the supplier which genuinely meets the requirements you have set out. Ensure that the design of the evaluation criteria involves clinical input, and also that clinical input can be available during the procurement process and the evaluation itself.

- Be pragmatic and flexible in the design of the requirements: it is important to remember that suppliers will price based upon the requirements that you set out. Therefore, you may want to consider include the ability for certain functionality to be "additional" or for suppliers to include added value services as part of a value for money offering within their bid.

- Manage expectations amongst clinical staff – remember that implementation will be challenging. Starting slow and growing the system to allow practice to adapt is more likely to reap longer term benefits.

- Ask for help – we have appointed a HSCIC team to work with all Trusts applying to the IDC Fund. If you are not sure who your local HSCIC representative is, please email us and we will put you in touch with the appropriate point of contact: england.nhstechfund@nhs.net

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meet the standard and will be excluded from the procurement process by virtue of the pass/fail requirements.

[2] http://www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/systemsandservices/eprescribing/baselinefunctspec.pdf

4 What should go in to requirements?

- A clear description of what you need a system to do. Think about anything locally that will influence this for example, wide ranges of users, local vagaries in practice, integration, access issues, unusual care pathways etc.

- Try and keep the descriptions focussed and leave scope for suppliers to respond in ways that will illustrate functionality. You should also be realistic about what you require now and what can wait for in the future. If your requirements are aspirational then that is fine but this must be stated. A relationship with a supplier will continue over several years, thus ensure that you leave scope for this to be supported and partnerships to develop. Be clear on timescales and any particular roadmap that you wish to pursue.

5 What do good requirements look like?

The following illustrate some examples of requirements that have been used.

The system **must** support the prescribing of medicines (including non-prescription and prescription, licenced and un-licenced, 'hospital only', complementary, experimental trial and controlled drugs), medical gases, blood and blood products, dressings, radiopharmaceutical products and medical devices using multiple local, NHS accepted catalogues and formularies

This requirement attempts to set a clear steer as regards what the system must do but it is an example of aspiration mixed with necessity. The example is a mandatory requirement but due to the extended list and mix of medicines types and the use of formulary there is unlikely to be a system that is available to do this.

Realistically a system is likely to need to support licensed and unlicensed medicines including controlled drugs as a core requirement. The addition of trial and blood products etc could be identified as a 'would like' or in the case of radio pharmacy possibly aspirational.

The allowance of 100 words to respond also creates a real challenge for suppliers who are likely to struggle to give a clear picture of what they are able to deliver. Word limits can be helpful as they can focus a response; but be careful to set the limit at a sensible count given both the type of response required and the priority within the bid.

the system **must** allow a prescriber or NMP to specify in the prescription all the paramters relevant to the medication or IV fluid being prescribed, including entry of dose ranges, titration versus pain and the linking/cross tapering of medications	List the parameters both explicit and inherent in the system's definition of a prescription, the coding associated with those parameters (such as dm+d for medication) and the options available for those parameters (including the possible entries for dose, route, duration, frequency or rate of administration) uk national terms will be preferred

Following from the above this requirement looks at the completion of all prescription parameters and again this is mandatory. A total of 200 words is stated as being allowed for the response. The subsidiary information requests a number of additional pieces of information making this seemingly straight forward response much more complex.

The example above leaves more discretion for the supplier to identify what they can deliver – it leaves scope for contracting around potential later delivery for items that may not be currently available. The requirement could also be split to look at high risk medicines separately.

6 What buying vehicles are available for ePrescribing?

NHS Shared Business Services are expected to launch a framework which should be available early Autumn 2014. This has used high level requirements to identify systems on the market. It will enable Trusts to create their own specific, local requirements as part of their own "mini-competition". The framework will come with a template contract and guidance, and will enable Trusts to make a selection based on their needs.

G-Cloud
Government Digital Service Framework

7 References

This document should be read with reference to the Government's ICT Strategy, together with references to the 'Digital by Default Service Manual' https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/digital-by-default or the 'Open Source Standards' https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-standards-principles/open-standards-principles