

Bid register: transparency and order in the procurement competition

The bid register is the structured documentation of all suppliers participating in a tender or request. In addition to master data, it typically records submission times, bid prices and assignments to lots or line items. For buyers in DACH industry, it is a central steering tool for traceability, compliance and the fair comparison of bids.

Key facts

- The bid register documents all participants of a tender with relevant bid data.
- It often forms the basis for bid evaluation and subsequent contract award.
- In public procurement law, maintaining a bid register is provided for in the tender documents.
- It increases traceability and protects against accusations of favouritism or lack of transparency.
- In digital procurement systems, the bid register is often generated automatically from RFQ workflows.
- Data protection and confidentiality play an important role, as competitor data is contained in it.

Definition: bid register

A bid register is a register of all companies that have participated in a tender, request or auction. It generally contains company data, contact information, the time of bid submission and frequently also the bid prices as well as commitments to lots or line items.

Distinction from the bid list

In practice, the terms bid register and bid list are often used synonymously, although there are subtle differences. The bid list is frequently the formal list of participating bidders drawn up at bid opening, as provided for in public procurement law. The bid register is broader and can additionally include pre-qualified, rejected or bidders not listed in time. For private industrial procurement, the key point is that the register is maintained completely, kept up to date and in an audit-proof manner.

- Bid list: formal list at bid opening
- Bid register: comprehensive register covering the entire tender process

Content and typical data fields

A practical bid register contains, in addition to master data such as company name, address and contact details, usually an identifier such as the D-U-N-S Number (DUNS) for the unique identification of the company. It is typically supplemented by the tender reference, lot number, submission time, bid price, discount structures such as volume discounts in procurement, and the status of the bidder. Notes on queries, clarifications during the competitive dialogue and the result of the evaluation are also often included.

- Master data and a unique identification number

- Tender reference and lot assignment
- Submission time, bid price, discount terms
- Status: admitted, rejected, submitted later, awarded

Legal framework

In public procurement law, the maintenance of a bid register is anchored in the procurement and contract regulations for the award of services; it forms part of the tender documents. In the private sector there is no comparable obligation, but the register serves documented compliance and can serve as evidence in disputes. Companies should observe data protection regulations, as bidder data may contain personal information. A legal review is recommended on a case-by-case basis.

Methods and approach for setting up

A bid register is ideally created before the tender is published and maintained throughout the entire tender process. Its structure follows a proven sequence that differs between manual spreadsheets and integrated e-procurement systems.

Pre-qualification and admission

Before the actual request, buyers check which suppliers can be admitted at all. This includes reviewing references, financial figures and delivery capability, and for critical products a supplier sanctions screening. The results of the pre-qualification flow into the register so that it remains traceable why a supplier was admitted or rejected. A structured requirements catalogue helps to define the admission criteria objectively and to document them in the register.

Maintenance during the tender process

During the tender period, all interactions are linked to the bid register: receipt of queries, sent clarifications, deadline extensions and finally the bid receipt with timestamp. Particularly important is the complete documentation of submission times, as late bids must generally be excluded. Digital platforms do this automatically; for paper-based processes, a receipt book with signature is recommended.

- Document every bidder communication with date and content
- Record bid receipt with a clear timestamp
- Changes to the register only with a change note and responsible person

Completion and archiving

After the award decision, the bid register serves as the basis for documenting the bid evaluation and informing unsuccessful bidders. Typically, rejection reasons are at least prepared in substance in order to improve the chances for future tenders. The register is then archived; the retention period is governed by commercial and tax law as well as contractual requirements. Looking at archived registers helps in future when selecting qualified bidders.

Key KPIs around the bid register

The bid register is not only a documentation tool but also provides key figures on the quality of the procurement competition. These values can be derived directly from the registrations of recent tenders.

Number of bidders and competitive intensity

The average number of admitted and actually bidding suppliers per tender shows how attractive and

open to competition the tenders are. In practice, the rule of thumb often applies: the higher the number of qualified bids, the better the negotiating position. A declining number of bidders across several tenders may indicate overly narrow admission criteria or unattractive framework conditions.

Deadline compliance and quality rate

How many bids arrive on time and complete? This rate reveals the clarity of the tender documents and the professionalism of communication during the term. Incomplete bids often point to an imprecise requirements catalogue. The rate of second and late submissions also becomes visible via the register.

Reuse rate of bidder data

How many registered bidders are invited again for follow-up tenders? A high reuse rate reduces the effort for pre-qualification and data maintenance. With a well-maintained supplier evaluation and a regular risk heatmap, the pool of qualified bidders can be developed systematically and pre-qualified for future awards.

Risks and controls in handling bidder data

The bid register contains sensitive competitive and company data. Without appropriate controls, risks arise for data protection, trade secrets and the integrity of the tender process.

Data protection and confidentiality

Bidder data may contain personal information about contact persons and is subject to data protection law. In addition, bid prices and terms are the bidders' trade secrets. In practice, sharing the bid register with other bidders is often only permissible in restricted form, e.g. without prices and without confidential components. Bidders may mark individual information as confidential; such notes belong in the register.

Collusion and manipulation risks

A carefully maintained register helps to identify patterns of collusion, for example when the same companies alternately submit bids or conspicuous price patterns occur. Controls such as the separation of duties and four-eyes review in the evaluation, documented assignments to lots and the traceability of every status change have a preventive effect. A functioning compliance framework with documented responsibilities is more important here than the register itself.

Integration into procurement processes

The bid register only unfolds its full benefit when it is interlinked with adjacent processes: with the supplier pre-assessment, supplier sanctions screening before contract award and later supplier development in the annual supplier review. When a bidder is awarded a contract, contracts should contain provisions on retention of title and liability in addition to prices and delivery terms. This builds the bridge from the tender process to the ongoing business relationship.

Current developments and digitalisation

The handling of bid registers is changing noticeably due to digitalisation, the platform economy and new regulatory requirements. Static spreadsheets are increasingly being replaced by dynamic, system-supported registers.

Digital procurement platforms

In e-procurement and marketplace systems, the bid register is created automatically: every registration, every query and every bid is recorded with a timestamp. This reduces manual effort and increases audit reliability. At the same time, master data can be maintained in a standardised way via unique identifiers such as the D-U-N-S Number (DUNS) and reconciled with internal systems. For small and medium-sized enterprises, this significantly lowers the barrier to entry for participating in industrial tenders.

Sustainability and supply chain due diligence

Requirements for sustainability and supply chain due diligence, for example in the context of the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence (CSDDD), are increasingly shifting verification topics into pre-qualification. Bid registers thus become a place where the sustainability and compliance evidence of participating companies is also documented. This makes the award decision more traceable and supports reporting. A legal assessment of the respective obligations is required on a case-by-case basis.

Dynamic procurement models

New award formats such as the competitive dialogue for complex services, dynamic price formation via commodity indexation or ongoing framework agreement tenders require flexible register structures. The register must then be maintained over longer periods and across multiple rounds. Even for rapid demand coverage, e.g. via marketplaces or cross docking as a logistics concept, a minimal bidder documentation remains sensible to ensure comparability and compliance.

Typical metrics

Number of qualified bidders per tender: typically 3–6

Higher values indicate healthy competition

Bids submitted on time: > 95 %

Indicator of clear documents and communication

Completeness rate of bids: > 90 %

Weak values indicate an imprecise requirements catalogue

Reuse rate of bidder data: typically > 70 %

A well-maintained register reduces pre-qualification effort

Practical example

A medium-sized mechanical engineering company tenders the manufacture of frame assemblies for a new series production start (SOP). To date, bids have been managed in emails and spreadsheets, which repeatedly led to objections during internal audit reviews. The procurement department introduces a structured bid register and links it to the RFQ process.

- Pre-qualification of eight suppliers including supplier sanctions screening and D-U-N-S check, results documented in the register
- Bid receipt with timestamp, prices and lot assignment fully recorded; two late bids comprehensibly excluded
- Evaluation with four-eyes review; unsuccessful bidders receive structured feedback as part of the

documentation

- Awarded suppliers are transferred to supplier evaluation and pre-qualified for follow-up projects

Conclusion

The bid register is more than a form: it is the backbone of a traceable and legally secure procurement competition. Those who maintain it consistently from pre-qualification to archiving gain transparency over the bidder market, protect themselves against compliance risks and build a reusable pool of qualified suppliers. With growing digitalisation, its maintenance is increasingly automated and integrated into procurement platforms. For industrial buyers, the effort is worthwhile in any case: the investment in a well-maintained register pays off through better prices, fewer disputes and faster tender processes.

Frequently asked questions

What belongs in a bid register?

Typically, the register should contain company master data, a unique identifier, the tender reference, lot assignment, submission time, bid price and processing status. It is also advisable to add notes on queries, clarifications and the evaluation. Markings for confidential information and the result of the pre-qualification should also be recorded.

Is a bid register mandatory in private procurement?

In private industrial procurement, there is no legal obligation to maintain a bid register. In public procurement law, by contrast, the bid register is part of the tender documents. Even without an obligation, maintaining one is recommended for compliance, traceability and efficiency reasons; in a dispute it serves as evidence. Details should be legally reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Who may inspect the bid register?

The bid register from public tenders can be inspected by participants, with confidential information such as prices generally redacted. In the private sector, the contracting party sets the rules; for competitive reasons, bid prices are only shared with authorised internal parties. Data protection requirements concerning the personal data of contact persons must be observed.

How does a bid register differ from a bid list?

The bid list is the formal list of participating bidders drawn up at bid opening, as found primarily in public procurement law. The bid register is broader and covers the entire process from pre-qualification to archiving. In practice, however, the terms are often used synonymously. What matters is the documented, audit-proof content.

What advantages does a digital bid register offer?

Digital systems record registrations and bid submissions automatically with a timestamp, reduce manual maintenance work and increase audit reliability. In addition, master data can be compared in a standardised way via unique identifiers, and key figures such as the number of bidders or deadline compliance can be evaluated directly. Integration with supplier evaluation and compliance checks also creates value beyond the individual tender.

How long must a bid register be retained?

The retention period is governed by commercial and tax law requirements as well as contractual and procurement law obligations; in practice, several years are common. For public tenders, review periods

and archiving obligations may also be relevant. The specific applicable periods should be checked on a case-by-case basis and defined as binding internally.