



12 reasons not to choose spreadsheets for Tender Assessment

The tender assessment phase is critical to the success of any procurement project. If the wrong decision is made, you may face legal challenges, hefty costs and major delays to your project's delivery – putting its entire outcome at risk.

One easy step to reduce this risk, is to stop using spreadsheets to support the complex tender assessment process. They are not designed to manage complex procurement processes with multiple stakeholders, large volumes of documentation and significant numbers of criteria and sub-criteria.

Need further convincing? Here's 12 reasons why you should reconsider the use of spreadsheets:

- 1. Spreadsheets are two dimensional**

As tender assessment is hierarchical it can't be represented properly in a table, and if you try to use a series of linked networked spreadsheets these can lack coordination and ultimately accuracy. The complexity of aggregation, drill down, weightings, allocation of people and workflow cannot be supported by a spreadsheet.
- 2. They fail to evidence a rigorous, robust process**

With c. 42% of challenges upheld, it's vital to maintain a clear and transparent audit trail to evidence how the winning bidder was selected and ensure your project stands up to scrutiny. There is no capability to time or date stamp entries or to consistently log changes in a spreadsheet. Your project is left open to legal challenge which can result in delays, legal fees and reputational damage.
- 3. 90% of spreadsheets contain human errors which are difficult to verify or locate**

It only needs one cell to refer to cell M34 instead of N34 in a formula for example, and the whole validity of the assessment comes into question. And the chances are, given the complex tasks your spreadsheet is trying to do, you won't notice these mistakes, leading you to the wrong decision.
- 4. They are difficult to develop – you're reliant on consultants**

The complexity of the task makes it very difficult to represent a best practice model for the assessment of Value for Money in a spreadsheet. This can result in spending considerable time building spreadsheet sets to model an assessment which often contain errors. The alternative option to buy in spreadsheets from your advisor would violate the best practice approach of building assessments internally.
- 5. There's no ability to query a report**

A spreadsheet lacks any depth when it comes to analysing the results of an assessment. A series of complex linked spreadsheets will ultimately give you one final number for each bidder. You can't ask a spreadsheet "what would happen if we changed the weightings?" for example. Interrogating spreadsheet data can be extremely laborious for this kind of analysis and often takes much of your advisor's valuable time.

6. There's no instant graphical data

In order to empower effective decision making, it's critical to be able to visualise information in real time. Although it's possible to produce quality graphical data in a spreadsheet, it doesn't show graphical views of the assessment as changes occur. Further support from a project team member would be required to achieve this.

7. There's a lack of transparency

Lack of transparency is one of the top reasons for a bidder challenge. To enable full transparency and effective negotiation throughout the tender assessment process, the scoring and rationale must be intrinsically linked to the relevant documentation. A spreadsheet alone isn't able to support these complex requirements.

8. They have reduced distribution and collation functionality

Once an assessment model has been built in a spreadsheet, you have to distribute either the spreadsheet components or scorecards to all the right stakeholders, along with the correct documentation. Even with limited model complexity and a small number of assessors, this can be very time consuming and relies on your key stakeholders accurately completing their allocated tasks on time.

9. There's no workflow management

When using an assessment model in a spreadsheet, it's quite common for criteria of negligible contribution to a decision to be looked at before those of critical strategic importance. This not only goes against common sense but also means that any emerging results are meaningless.

10. There's no just in time analysis

In any assessment there is always a point at which losing bidders can never catch up. All the effort you spend supporting bidders after the point they can't win is essentially wasted. However, as spreadsheets don't collate information in real time, you'll have no idea when that point has been reached.

11. Spreadsheets make decision making difficult

When arriving at a decision and debriefing bidders at the end of a competition, there are many and varied data sets that inform the competition. From ITx documentation, clarifications, issues raised by evaluators and rationale, to weightings and bid documentation. These are time consuming and costly to pull together in a spreadsheet which makes your decision making difficult and unclear.

12. A superior solution is available

Our AWARD[®] software has been specially designed to support the collaborative and multi-dimensional nature of complex evaluation. Complemented by our thought-leadership and expert services, AWARD[®] helps you maintain a robust and transparent audit trail throughout the procurement process, helping you to deliver the best possible outcome.

Find out how our AWARD[®] software and expert services can help you deliver the best possible outcome on your next complex procurement:

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