



Community and Voluntary Service (CVS) is a voluntary organisation which is set up, owned and run by local groups to support, promote and develop local voluntary and community action. CVS support their members by providing them with a range of services and by acting as a voice for the local voluntary and community sector.

For more information on our work and how we support the local voluntary and community sector, please visit our website.

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Quality Standards Information

ISO 9000

This leaflet explains how to meet the requirements of the standard, outlines resources an organisation will need and provides information on quality standards in relation to procurement and tendering.



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Serving the Local Voluntary and Community Sector

What is it?

ISO9001:2000 is the best-known, internationally recognised standard for quality management in business systems. The standard is published by the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) whose purpose is to facilitate international trade by providing harmonised requirements for products and services.

The standard is a framework for managing and improving an organisation's quality system using a process approach. It does not give requirements for specific products or services; rather, it provides a set of generic requirements relating to the processes of development and production, and how they will be managed, reviewed and improved in order to achieve customer satisfaction.

How do I get it?

First you need to put the quality system in place and internally assess it. The standard requires all processes to be documented as procedures to which staff are expected to conform.

Implementing a system which will comply with the standard involves writing procedures that 'say what you do', documenting them, ensuring they are followed and checking they are effective. The organisation compiles a quality manual, outlining how the quality management procedures have been implemented and how the requirements are being met.

Getting ISO9000 will require a significant time commitment at the very least - it can take between 6 and 18 months to implement and your governing body will need to be fully committed. Training in understanding the standards may be required. Actions to implement the requirements of ISO9000 and to maintain compliance with its requirements will need to be taken. Your organisation may need to buy in external people, such as consultants, to help with implementation.

Sources of further information

- **British Standards Institute (BSi)**

Founders of the first quality management system, the forerunner to the ISO 9000 series, and a continued key member of the ISO 9000 technical committees

You can purchase copies of standards, arrange certification and find out about consultancy service.

www.bsi-global.com/en/Assessment-and-certification-services/management-systems/Standards-and-Schemes/ISO-9001/

- **United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS)**

The sole national accreditation body recognised by government to assess, against internationally agreed standards, organisations that provide certification, testing, inspection and calibration services.

<http://www.ukas.com>

- **'First Steps in Quality' booklet**

Produced by Charities Evaluation Service, offers guidance on what quality and quality assurance mean, why quality matters to voluntary organisations, what systems are available, how to choose the right approach, how to get started and further help and information.

<http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/downloads/firststepsquality-14-20.pdf>

- **CVS Website—Quality Standards**

Regularly updated resources relating to quality standards for Third Sector Organisations.

<http://www.voluntaryworks.org.uk/cvsmidandnorthbeds/QualityAssurance.asp>

Is the supplier organisation certified under the relevant quality standard, and does the certification cover the services relevant to the requirement? If not, has the supplier proposed an acceptable alternative quality management process?
Does the certification body conform to the EN 45000 standards, and is it accredited by UKAS or other appropriate national accreditation body?
When was certification awarded and last renewed?
Do reference site visits and supplier site visits confirm that a Quality Management System permeates the supplier's organisation?

There is yet more guidance which goes into methods of weighting and scoring the answers in the PQQ. The procurement officers are allowed quite a bit of flexibility, as shown in the following extract from the guidance.

The precise manner in which buyers undertake the PQQ evaluation may vary somewhat depending on the nature of the contract (for example, value and importance)... Please note that this is not intended to be definitive, or to replace professional judgements by procurement staff or professional advisors on a case-by-case basis.

The guidance then goes into detail on the recommended approach to scoring. In general, you can expect the answers to the quality questions to be worth around 7.5% of the overall score.

You'll notice that nowhere is there a requirement for ISO9000, or even anything specific saying it would score higher points than another system. It is however clearly important that the quality system you choose is relevant to your organisation and its work – and it would help if it was one that was easily recognised by procurement officers. Certification of your quality system does give you higher marks – and for ISO9000 this means UKAS accredited certification is the best option. But another relevant quality system that is certified could score as highly.

And then there's the issue of certification....

ISO9000 can be audited by an independent certification body – this is referred to as accreditation or certification. Your certificate is temporary and must be renewed at regular intervals recommended by the certification body – usually between one and three years.

Please note, you don't have to be certified – that's not a requirement of the standard. You can be in compliance without being certified. But, your customers are more likely to believe that you have an effective quality management system if an independent external auditor says so.

If you are going to go for certification, it is best to use a United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) accredited auditor - known as certification bodies. The UKAS accreditation means that the auditor complies with an ISO standard for auditing quality systems. If the auditor is not UKAS accredited there is no guarantee that the certification they give you would hold any weight. Unfortunately, it's quite expensive - UKAS accredited certification will cost around £2000 for a smaller organisation and upwards of £3500 for a larger one. UKAS accredited certification bodies are not allowed to offer consultancy, assessment and certification as a "one-stop shop" package. They are also required to carry out a contract review with their potential clients to ensure that they are able to supply the certification that is required by them.

Non-UKAS accredited certification bodies do offer ISO9000 certification and it is not mandatory for these certification bodies to seek UKAS accreditation – however, non-UKAS accredited bodies have not been checked to find out whether they carry out their certification activities in accordance with appropriate standards.



What's the catch?

It's not always easy to implement ISO9000 in a service organisation - the standard originated in the industrial sector and whilst the latest version has been made more user-friendly, it still may be less relevant for many third sector organisations. ISO9000 is used in a variety of public sector organisations and is quite common in nursing homes which are often third sector organisations. However there are few examples of ISO9000 being used in the wider third sector, and therefore drawing upon other organisations' experiences and making comparisons will be difficult. As a quality management standard, it was not designed to evaluate an organisation's broader impacts on society or the environment, and elements of the standard may be hard to implement within non-hierarchical organisations or non-traditional working structures such as co-operatives.

When making a decision about whether ISO9000 is right for your organisation you should:

1. Consider the suitability of the standard for your organisation compared with alternatives
2. Be realistic about the costs and benefits in relation to your actual or potential activities – particularly tendering

We need it for tendering though, don't we?

There's no simple answer to that. To help you judge whether ISO9000 should be important to you for tendering, you'll need to look at what the procurement officers have to take into account. The Office of Government Commerce provides guidance to procurement officers on how the process should work and the following information is taken from that guidance.

The first time quality systems get a mention in the procurement process is in the PQQ – the Pre-Qualifying Questionnaire. The PQQ is designed to enable the buyer (the public body, such as your local authority) to create a shortlist of suitable providers based on evaluation of the providers' technical knowledge and experience, capability/capacity and organisational and financial standing. One section of the PQQ will be about your quality system.

The PQQ asks a list of questions and the answers should be used by procurement officers to assess each supplier's suitability to tender against the requirement. There are two model PQQs - one for use in procurements with a financial value beneath applicable EU thresholds and one for higher value procurement. The wording relating to quality in both models is the same and reads:

6 QUALITY ASSURANCE	
6.1 Does your organisation hold a recognised quality management certification, for example BS/EN/ISO9000 or equivalent?	Yes / No
6.2 If not, does your organisation have a quality management system*?	Yes / No
6.3 If you do not have quality certification or a quality management system, please explain why:	
Notes: * "system" means processes and procedures to ensure that the subject is properly managed. This includes making sure that legal requirements are met.	

The answers you give will be assessed by procurement officers – the guidance they should use when they are evaluating PQQs asks them to consider the following questions:

Does the supplier have a suitable quality management system and appropriate quality records?
Does the organisation have a suitable quality policy and effective quality organisation?
Is the supplier's quality organisation and quality management system of a suitable standard, with demonstrable evidence of continuous service quality improvements in line with customer expectations?

If the supplier has neither accreditation nor a quality system, this may give rise to doubts about its ability to provide goods or services of a consistent quality. As a minimum, one would expect to see a supplier provide information that it has considered the implementation of appropriate controls to achieve and ensure consistent performance and intends to adopt such processes where appropriate.
A scoring system of 'Certificated quality management system' – high marks / 'Proprietary quality management system' – lower marks or 'No quality management system' – low or no marks, is suggested.