# Why the IT tender process is so important for hospices

Most hospices review their IT and technology needs periodically. It's not uncommon for hospices to start by referring to a previous IT tender document, or search for a generic template. Whilst this often provides a good starting point, one major challenge can be the lack of specific detail outside of key technical requirements.

Today, your IT partner needs to delve deeper and understand your goals, vision and the specific needs of departments to ensure the tender response aligns to your organisations goals. This helps you prioritise your IT needs for the present and the future with confidence, allowing for effective budget planning over that period.

We have been supporting hospices and charities for many years and in our experience, the best approach is when two parties work as partners.
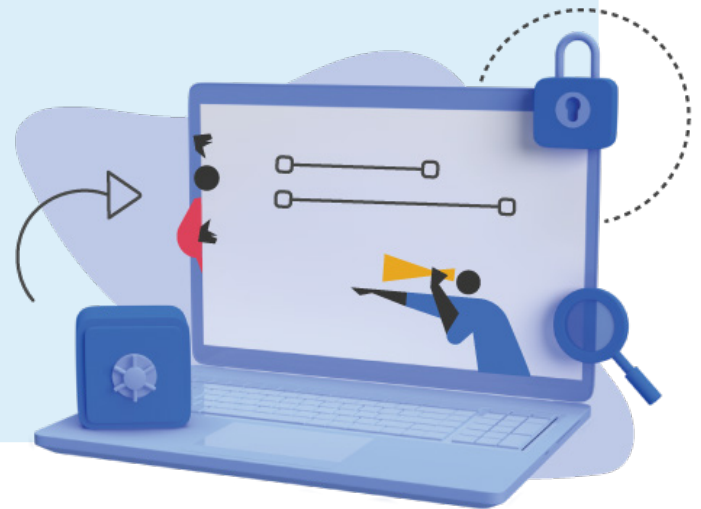
Important considerations

1. Look for a partner, not a provider

- How can any technology partner begin to make recommendations when they don't understand our organisation at a strategic level?

- Any experienced IT provider should want to understand your hospice's strategy and principles of sustainability. They also need to understand your values, vision, risks, objectives, short/long-term goals, financial objectives and governance.

2. Allow the IT partner to audit your systems to mitigate unforeseen costs

- Allow potential IT partners to do their own system analysis. This reduces the potential of nasty surprises and unforeseen costs once onboarded. Tenderers can analyse your systems upfront and give an indication as to how they plan to address any issues along with any project costs. We see it far too often, whereby a hospice has already outlined what they think they need, only to have missed things the chosen IT partner has found.

3. Hospices are not the NHS

- The traditional health/public sector style of tendering simply doesn't lend itself to the hospice model. It is too prescriptive and cumbersome which can lead to key IT support needs being left out, leading to higher unaccounted for costs.

- Include the most recent strategy document or yearly report you've published so the IT provider gets an initial understanding of where the hospice is from a strategic perspective.

4. Don't be overly prescriptive

- Every IT partner will have a different way of doing things so try not to make the tender too specific. It's more about what you want to achieve, leaving it quite open will allow you to see how each IT partner approaches the tender with their own ideas and solutions.

- However, as a guideline, you would be expected to give a deadline for submissions or any key dates/milestones in the process along with contact information for any queries and submissions.

5. Define the core requirements

Scope of work

- Set the minimum requirements / expectations you require to remove any prospective IT partners who cannot deliver what you want.

- Indicate any current IT challenges you're facing to gain an understanding as to how an IT partner would approach these issues.

- Provide a detailed description of the services you require (e.g., helpdesk support, network management, cyber security, software updates).

- Specify any tasks and responsibilities expected along with service level agreements (SLAs) and performance metrics.

Technical requirements

- Provide an overview of your current IT setup including any specifications required for hardware and software support so the IT partner can decide if they can support it before submitting a proposal

- List any current IT services provided by your IT partner to ensure you have a smooth transition if you decide to change provider.

- Highlight any compliance and regulations you need data security standards to meet.

- Highlight any integrations that are required for existing systems.

Innovation and future-proofing

- Set expectations for keeping your IT infrastructure up-to-date with the latest technologies.

- Give an overview on any proposals you may have for future improvements and innovations.

6. Where does technology fit?

- Identify areas where you can utilise technology and implement digital ways of working to improve the service you deliver to your patients and service users. Ask how the IT partner can support you with this or what similar projects they've worked on previously.

7. Understand all points of view

- It's important to get the view of what's going on across the hospice. There are many moving parts in a hospice, including clinical, retail, fundraising, marketing, finance etc so be sure to speak to all key stakeholders.

- Ask simple questions to the wider team to help you gain an deeper understanding of any issues. For example, there may be simple issues which could be quickly addressed and therefore improve staff morale.

"What frustrations do you have?"

"What would make you job easier?"

"Are there any tools you've used in previous roles which might help you?"

8. Consider compliance & credentials
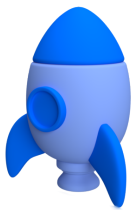
- For trustees and senior management teams, credentials and accreditations are key to providing the right level of data security and IT support to a hospice. They demonstrate the ability protect the brand of the organisation and the security of your service user's data. ISO 27001 and DSP Toolkit credentials are the bare minimum an IT partner should have when working with a hospice.

- Experience is key. Always ask for recommendations from other hospices. References and case studies can also help but always try and have a conversation with some of the partner's customers.

HQP Hospice Quality Partnership

NHS Digital Security & Protection Toolkit

bsi. ISO/IEC 27001 Information Security Management

9. Carefully consider the transition process

- Switching IT providers can be a little daunting as it's a major decision to make. Request a demonstration of the IT provider's onboarding process. You want to make sure that the transition process is as seamless as possible. Gaining references from other organisations or hospices as to how the transition process worked is always a good option too.

Interested in our award-winning IT services?

Technology is the key to improving efficiencies, reducing operational costs and enhancing clinical services. This is why choosing the right technology partner is more important than ever in the hospice sector.

Speak to a member of the team today.

T | 01246 266 130

E | info@ct.uk

ct.uk