WORK SAMPLE · SELF-DIRECTED ANALYSIS · DETAILS ANONYMISED

Who Can Actually Bid

An IFI-funded urban water pipeline programme, screened before anyone spent money on it — and the answer was: not a manufacturer.

AT A GLANCE

Subject	Replacement of ~11 km of urban steel water transmission mains, three lots, Eastern Europe
Funding	Multilateral development bank loan and grant; procurement through the bank's e-procurement portal
Contract form	FIDIC Green Book · design, supply, construction, testing and commissioning
Diameters	DN 400 – DN 1200; ductile iron, GRP or HDPE permitted; 50-year design service life
Question asked	Can a pipe or fittings manufacturer bid for this?
Answer delivered	**No** — with a definition of who can, and how a manufacturer could still participate

METHOD

Standard development-bank procurement packages share one structure across institutions: instructions to participants, a data sheet, eligibility and qualification criteria, forms, requirements, and contract conditions. The commercially decisive material is concentrated in two of those documents, and almost never in the notice.

I read the qualification criteria against the scope, then tested the three things that actually eliminate bidders: experience type, concurrent guarantee capacity, and the local execution route.

WHAT THE DOCUMENTS SHOWED

FINDING 01 — EXPERIENCE TYPE

The thresholds are written for a contractor, not a supplier

The contract is design-and-build. Qualification requires general contracting experience, experience as a main contractor or joint-venture lead, and specific completed works — not supply references:

- Lot 1 — at least one contract including ≥2 km of urban water or pressurised sewer main at DN 1000 mm or above, *including design activity*
- Lot 2 — ≥1 km at DN 800 mm or above
- Lot 3 — ≥1 km at DN 600 mm or above

A separate criterion requires demonstrated environmental, social, health and safety management experience on comparable works. No volume of pipe sales satisfies any of these.

FINDING 02 — GUARANTEE CAPACITY

Three bank guarantees run concurrently

The binding financial constraint is not turnover — it is how much guarantee facility the bidder's bank will issue at one time:

- Tender security — up to €162,000 across lots
- Performance security — 10% of contract value
- Advance payment guarantee — 10% of contract value

Alongside minimum annual turnover of €5.4M / €3.3M / €1.3M by lot, and separately evidenced access to financial resources. A bidder can meet every technical criterion and still fail here.

FINDING 03 — EXECUTION ROUTE

Local design certification and a construction licence are not optional

Design must follow the national two-stage process and meet national design-certification requirements. Construction requires a licence in the highest consequence class, or a documented plan to obtain the necessary permits within 40 days of the Letter of Acceptance.

In practice this makes a qualified local partner a precondition of bidding, not an implementation detail to be resolved after award.

FINDING 04 — PROCEDURE

A deadline that closes a week before the meeting everyone watches

Under the instructions to participants, written questions must reach the client **seven calendar days before the clarification meeting.** Questions raised only live at the meeting produce an oral answer with no documented record before the minutes are issued.

Where an interpretation carries commercial weight, the written route is the one that survives a later dispute. Bidders routinely miss this date because they are focused on the meeting itself.

OUTPUT: WHO CAN BID

Rather than a yes/no, the screen produced a bidder profile the client could act on:

- Water or pipeline infrastructure contractor with main-contractor or JV-lead track record
- Urban water or sewer network references at DN 600–1200
- In-house or subcontracted design capability meeting national certification
- Balance sheet and banking facility able to carry three concurrent guarantees
- A credible in-country licensing and permitting route

Viable structure — prime contractor → local construction subcontractor → nationally licensed design house → pipe, valve and fitting suppliers.

A manufacturer's route into this contract is the fourth position, through the prime — not as a bidder.

RECOMMENDATION

Not a manufacturer opportunity. Any pipe, valve or fitting producer approaching this as a bidder would fail qualification on experience type alone, regardless of product quality, price or capacity.

For a contractor client, the screen instead surfaced the three items to resolve before committing: concurrent guarantee capacity, the design certification route, and the seven-day written question deadline.

WHY IT MATTERED

Development-bank packages read as open and international, and they are. That openness routinely draws bidders whose profile the qualification criteria exclude on the first page they never reached.

The cost of finding this out after committing to a bid is a tender security, a translation budget, and several weeks of engineering time. The cost of finding it out from the qualification annex is an afternoon.

Self-directed analysis prepared as a work sample. Buyer, location and project identifiers removed; all thresholds, guarantee figures, contract form and procedural rules are as they appear in the published procurement documents.