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OCRE 2024 Framework Agreement: Institution Guide to Using the Framework

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Abstract

This document provides institution guidance on the use of the GÉANT Cloud Framework OCRE 2024. It explains the basics of how the framework operates, outlines its benefits, and offers a step-by-step description of roles. It also shows how to adopt the framework and start the provisioning of procured cloud services using one of three methods under the Framework.

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Executive Summary

The GÉANT OCRE 2024 Cloud Framework (OCRE2024) is an umbrella contract for simplified purchasing of cloud services for all institutions in Europe, legal entities listed in the List of Participating Entities [1].

This document provides guidance on the use of OCRE2024 for institutions. It explains the basics of how the framework operates, outlines its benefits, and offers a step-by-step description of roles. It also explains how to adopt the framework and start the provisioning of procured cloud services using one of three methods under the Framework. It concludes by summarising the GÉANT support available to the National Research and Educations Networks (NRENs).

1 Introduction

The GÉANT OCRE 2024 Cloud Framework Agreement (OCRE2024) is a procurement vehicle for simplified purchasing of Cloud Services for all institutions in Europe like your institution (in this case NREs, their member institutions, and others). Legal entities are listed in the List of Participating Entities [2].

2 Getting Started

This section presents the steps you must follow to start using OCRE2024 Cloud Services, including the procedures for each of the three award methods to establish contracts under the framework to use specific services from a service provider.



Figure 2.1: Service delivery workflow

2.1 Lot Structure

OCRE2024 is split into 39 Lots (based on 39 participating countries). Agreements were awarded to service providers on the basis of one Lot per Country, with 3 sub-Lots per platform.

The Lot structure is shown below with the pattern country X = Lot 1:

Lot 1a = Platform / Solution A

Lot 1b = Platform / Solution B

Lot 1c = Platform / Solution C...

Bidders were awarded a platform per country Lot/country where they are ranked within the highest three in a contested platform sub-Lot. ('Contested means that more than one bidder offers the same IaaS+ solution in that specific country.)

The awarded service providers are ranked per sub-Lot based on the outcome of the tender evaluation, with a maximum of three service providers represented in total per platform/solution/sub-Lot. Each highest ranked bidder per sub-Lot is the preferred service provider of that sub-Lot and is added to a per country Lot. For example, Lot 1 = highest ranked bidder of Lot 1a, 1b, 1c. The Cloud Catalogue with awarded service providers is available online [3].

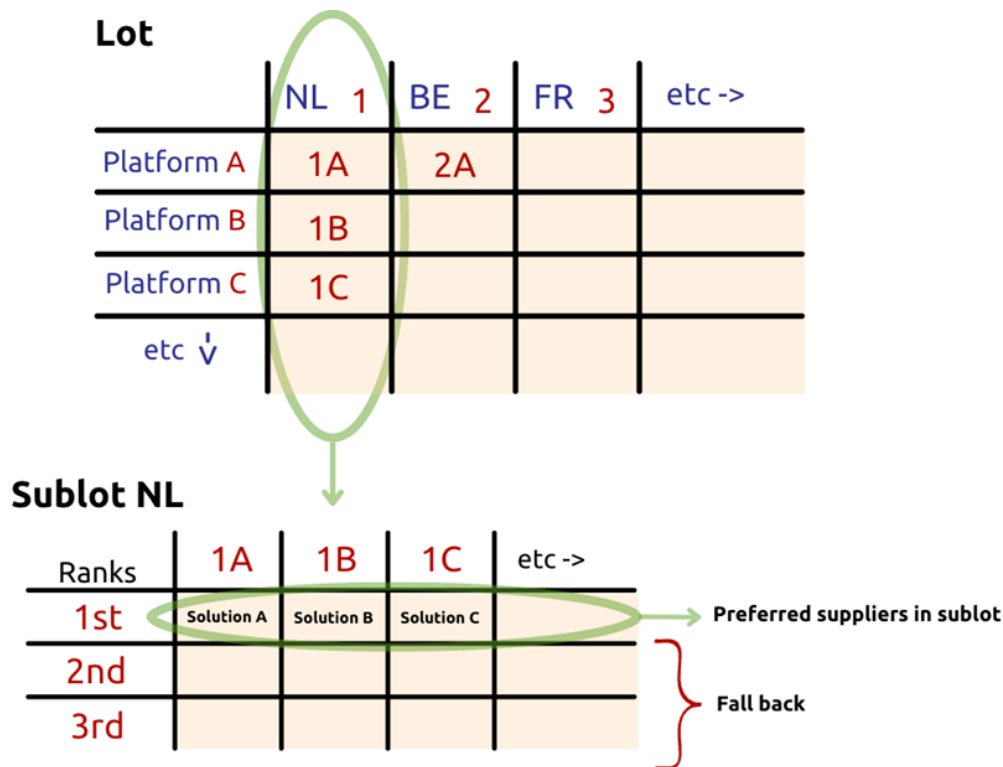


Figure 2.2: Lot structure example

2.2 Groups of Institutions and Discounts

Institutions (i.e. participating entities) to benefit from OCRE2024 are divided into three groups. These are:

Group A: The NREN and all its members are eligible, except local and central government bodies not involved in research and/or education (at all levels). Examples are statistics organisations, environmental assessment agencies, and meteorological institutes.

Group B: All institutions with a research and/or education focus that are, for whatever reason, not a member of the NREN. These may include university medical centres, libraries, museums, private universities, and primary and secondary (or further) education institutions.

Group C: All institutions that are affiliated with the NREN but who are not members and do not have a research or education focus. These may include central government bodies. These must be non-profit organisations.

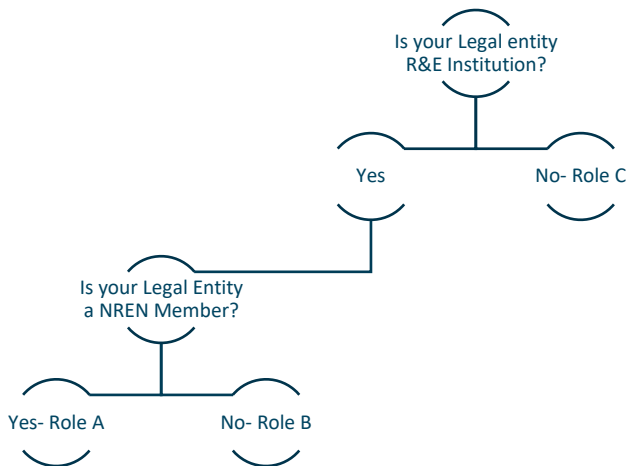


Figure 2.3: How to decide your group

2.3 Adoption and Service Delivery

To sign a Call-Off Contract (CoC), you must follow the award procedure to close the procurement activity and be compliant with public procurement law.

You can award a CoC using one of the following three methods:

1. By cascade method, without re-opening the competition within the sub-Lot. As shown in Figure 2.4., this is the preferred method, based on the tender documentation.
2. Via mini-competition:
 - o within a sub-lot.
 - o between the Platforms in a country.
3. Via desktop mini-competition without re-opening the competition.

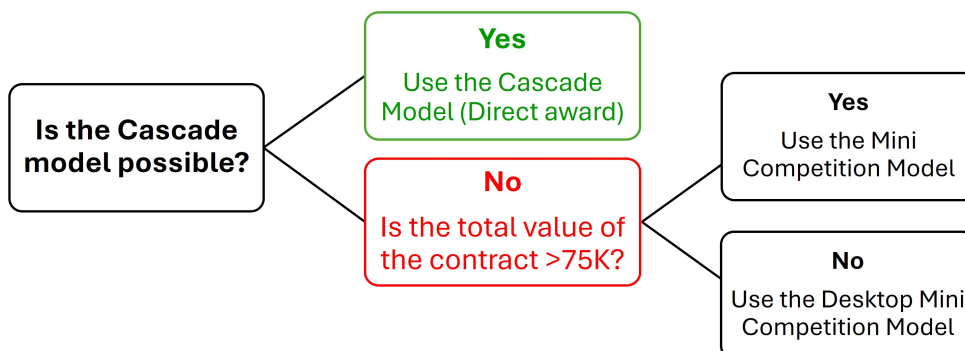


Figure 2.4: Decision Tree for Award Mechanism

Each method of buying services is described below.

2.3.1 Award Method 1: Direct Award via cascade method without re-opening competition

A Call-Off Contract (CoC) may be concluded under framework agreement sub-Lots with the highest ranked/preferred service provider in each sub-Lot/country via cascade. Cascade procurement (also known as 'sequential' or 'staged' procurement) is a method used in public procurement to award contracts in multiple stages based on the ranking of service providers per sub-Lot. If the preferred – highest ranked – service provider is unable to complete the call-off process for whatever reason, the next highest (#2, etc.) scoring service provider within a sub-Lot will be offered a CoC.

When To Use This Award Method

You may make a direct award via cascade to the preferred service provider in a sub-Lot if you:

- have workloads deployed where it is technically or economically infeasible to migrate to a different platform; or
- wish to (re-)purchase a (new) product or service from among the suite of products and services available on that platform; or
- have licensing arrangements (outside the scope of the framework) with a platform and/or service provider.

Institutions shall use the cascade method if one of the bullet points above applies. There is no free choice between the awarding mechanisms¹. When the first condition is met the products mentioned in the second bullet may be purchased through the cascade method if the NREN and/or institution wishes to procure through OCRE 2024. An institution may also use this award method when there are licensing agreements in place that require a certain platform/service provider to be used by the institution. This refers to a situation, for instance, where a product was purchased which only runs properly in conjunction with a certain platform.

The cascade method will also apply for awarding CoC's with a value of 75.000 Euro excl. VAT or higher, when conducting a mini-competition is not proportionate or effective. The principle of proportionality means that the awarding **procedure** imposed by the Institution must be **appropriate and necessary** to achieve the intended goal, and **not excessive** in relation to that goal. The key aspects of proportionality are that the awarding procedure must be suitable to achieve the contracting of the intended CoC, there must be no less restrictive way to achieve the CoC and the burden on services providers should be not excessive compared to the benefit of the CoC. Before an Institution conducts a mini-competition, it must assess whether that process is proportionate and effective:

1. Is the effort required from services providers reasonable for the intended CoC?
2. Would the same result be achievable via the simpler cascade procedure?

If a mini-competition cannot be reasonably run effectively or proportionally based on objective requirements (such as objective technical, functional or support requirements) and if the same result can be achieved via cascade, the Institution shall apply the cascade, as this is considered the least intrusive and most straightforward awarding procedure within the OCRE 2024 Framework.

How To Use This Award Method

You can approach the highest ranked/preferred service provider in each sub-Lot directly to finalise the CoC.

¹ Art. 33 sub 4 of the EU Directive on public procurement 2012/24/EU requires that the choice between awarding methods is based on objective criteria. This also means that there can be no free choice to choose between awarding mechanisms.

It is important that the highest-ranked service provider has a fair chance to be able to provide the services accordingly, before the institution can cascade down to the lower ranked. This means that it will give the highest service provider a reasonable timeframe to respond to the order, meaning 1 week – 5 working days to complete the CoC. In urgent situations for cloud, such as DR, BCP events or ransomware, hacks etc., the institution can shorten this reasonable term to the minimum of 2 working days for the highest ranked service provider to complete the CoC. Migration to another cloud platform or when the institution is already using that specific platform can't be considered urgent.

2.3.2 Award Method 2: Mini-Competition

You may also execute procurements through a regular mini-competition by re-opening the competition amongst all platforms in the specific Lot or sub-Lot, using other awarding criteria based on your specific needs. All capable service providers are invited to participate in that Lot or sub-Lot. Only non-substantial changes are permitted to the CoC.

When To Use This Award Method

Due to the effort level required by an institution and by service providers, running a mini-competition should be proportional and effective. 'Proportional' refers to the efforts that service providers must make to submit a bid. 'Effective' refers to the efforts an institution needs to make.

You can run a mini-competition within platforms when, for example, you:

- have a new workload.
- have a new specific project with, for example, new funding and/or requirements.
- would like to have an additional platform.
- have internal policies that require running a competition.

The highest ranked (preferred) service provider in each sub-Lot (for example, 1a) in this case will be added to the "all Platform country" – Lot, e.g., Lot 1.

To summarise:

You shall conduct a non-discriminatory, transparent, and objective procedure which shall include at least the following steps:

- Invite all service providers in the relevant Lot or sub-Lot to participate in the mini-competition.
- Run the mini-competition in writing via email or other (electronic) platform by choice.
- Allow service providers a reasonable timeframe in which to respond, which will depend on the circumstances of the specific case. For example, the complexity of the demand, etc.

You may also include elements in the non-discriminatory, transparent, and objective procedure such as:

- Collaborative mini-competitions on behalf of and/or with other institutions in their (sub-)Lot.
- The use of a modified CoC with non-substantial changes.
- The requirement that certain documentation requirements are used for (EC) financial audits.
- Cancel the mini-competition at their discretion.

- Award the second runner-up service provider if the initially awarded service provider fails to deliver in time and/or in full.
- Apply a standstill term of approximately one week upon preliminary awarding of the CoC.

For more information and support, please contact your local NREN.

2.3.3 Award Method 3: Desktop Mini-Competition Based on Awarding Criteria in Tender and Service Provider Bids

You may also use a desktop mini-competition without re-opening the competition among all available service providers within a sub-Lot (specific platform per country), re-using the awarding criteria from this ITT.

When To Use This Award Method

The desktop mini competition is a lightweight method for awarding limited projects, where a full mini competition is not proportional to the project value, recognising the efforts needed on both yours and service providers' sides for creating and responding to a mini-competition.

The desktop mini-competition may be used for awarding CoCs with a total value no larger than 75.000 Euro excl. VAT per project/assignment/etc. or as set by institutions' procurement policies. The desktop mini-competition will be held via the desktop mini-competition spreadsheet, reusing the awarding criteria from this tender within the sub-Lot or Lot to select the service provider that is most suitable.

Institutions can run a Desktop mini-competition in two ways:

1. Within a platform sub-Lot in a country; or
2. Within the country Lot containing all platforms preferred (highest-scoring) service provider.

All capable service providers within the sub-Lot or preferred service providers within a Lot will be accessed through this desktop mini-competition to conclude the CoC with the most suitable service provider based on the outcome. In a desktop mini-competition, the institution will collect required (price) information, in the manner specified below, which is needed to make a service provider selection through a self-service exercise, requiring no other than specific information pertaining to the case at hand and/or confirmation of the service providers' offering.

Institutions will evaluate service providers by reusing the scoring of most the Awarding Criterion (ACs), calculate the total cost of ownership (TCO) based on the specific requirements of the demand by using the online cost calculators in combination with the AC5 rate cards for professional services submitted.

How To Use This Award Method

To make an award decision using a desktop mini-competition, the institution will use information contained in the service provider's offer, GÉANT's scoring, and information from the service provider's online cost calculator. Service providers are not contacted for further input.

The institution will:

- evaluate all service providers in their sub-Lot, unless a service provider is clearly unable to meet a specific requirement, in which case this service provider may be excluded.
- reuse GÉANT's scores to the offer of the service provider for the following ACs:
 - AC1 - Service and Support
 - AC2 - Marketing and Adoption

- AC3 - Exit Support
- AC6 - Cloud in the Classroom
- AC7 - Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
- AC8 - Sustainability
- calculate the score in relation to a TCO calculation (replacing AC4 and AC5).
- use the standard CoC template without modifications.

The institution may adjust the relative weight given to each AC within the range specified in the Allowed Weight Range column.

Desktop Mini-Competition Award Criteria and Weight Ranges

Table 3.2 below shall be used for scoring Service Providers using ‘Award Method 2 - Desktop Mini-Competition’.

Award Criterium as specified in Vol 2 of the tender documents				
AC	Description	Original Weight (in %)	Allowed Weight Range (in %)	Score
AC1	Service and Support	30%	15% – 40%	As scored by GÉANT
AC2	Marketing and adoption	20%	5% – 25%	As scored by GÉANT
AC3	Exit Support	5%	5% – 25%	As scored by GÉANT
TCO	Total calculated cost (AC4 and AC5)	28%	15% – 60%	Calculated by institution
AC6	Cloud in the Classroom	5%	0% – 15%	As scored by GÉANT
AC7	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines	2%	0% – 10%	As scored by GÉANT
AC8	Sustainability	10%	5% – 25%	As scored by GÉANT

Table 2.1: Desktop Mini-Competition Award Criteria and Weight Ranges

A service provider’s TCO is calculated as follows:

- Calculate the IaaS+ costs using the Service Provider’s online cost calculator.
- Add professional services, if needed, using the submitted AC5 rate cards.
- Marks for TCO will be allocated using the following formula: $(\text{Lowest TCO} / \text{Calculated TCO}) * \text{Marks Available}$.

3 NREN Support

No two NRENs are alike. Although they all serve R&E and offer network connectivity, the types of services they offer in addition to this differ.

NRENs have already selected which role to take in OCRE2024. A description of each role and its implications for the NREN’s member institutions is provided in Table 7.1 below:

NREN Role	Description of the Role	What Institutions Can Do
Default role	Acts as an intermediary by making the framework agreements available in its respective country and facilitating connected institutions in purchasing from service providers (direct delivery model). The NREN does not sit in the contracting line.	Directly acquire and use the cloud services from the service providers.
Underwriter	Makes purchases from service providers (on behalf of its institutions) and distributes the acquired resources across its community (institutions and end users). The NREN sits in the contracting line and is seen as the only call-off customer towards the service providers.	Use the cloud services made available through its NREN.

Table 3.1: NREN roles in the Framework Agreement

3.1 Cost Recovery Fee

The cost recovery fee (CRF) is a percentage of the cloud consumption for the NREN to fund their efforts around the cloud services.

The process is optional and can be where:

- the service provider invoices the CRF on behalf of the NREN (the NREN is directly and completely funded by the government and cannot (may not) invoice institutions).
- the NREN invoices the CRF directly to the institutions:

Please contact your local NREN to discover the role they chose in OCRE2024 and the status of the NREN regarding the CRF NREN Cloud Contacts - GÉANT Cloud Services [4].

Glossary

AC	Award Criteria
EU	European Union
IaaS	Infrastructure as a Service
ID	Identity
NREN	National Research and Education Network
PaaS	Participating Entity
R&E	Research and Education
TCO	Total Cost of Ownership

References

- [1] <https://clouds.geant.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Lists-of-all-OCRE-2024-participating-entities-across-Europe.pdf>
- [2] <https://clouds.geant.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Lists-of-all-OCRE-2024-participating-entities-across-Europe.pdf>
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