

Tender Writer interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for tender writer roles focus on your ability to manage the bid process, work with technical experts and meet compliance requirements. Employers want to know you can stay calm under deadline pressure and produce accurate, persuasive documents.

- **Process:** How you approach a new tender from go/no-go to submission.
- **Behavioural:** How you have handled conflicting stakeholder input or a missed deadline.
- **Technical:** Your understanding of compliance matrices, evaluation criteria and procurement rules.
- **Scenario:** What you would do if you found a compliance gap close to the deadline.
- **Client-facing:** How you work with subject matter experts and manage expectations.
- **Deadline management:** How you prioritise multiple tenders with overlapping due dates.

Typically a phone screen with a recruiter or bid manager, followed by a face-to-face or video interview with the bid team lead. You may be given a short written exercise, such as mapping a tender question to evaluation criteria or drafting a response, and asked to present your approach.

1. Walk me through how you manage a tender response from receiving the request to final submission.

Why they ask

This tests your process discipline and whether you understand the end-to-end bid lifecycle, including compliance and deadline management.

How to structure your answer

Process walk-through: break the tender into stages, explain what you do at each stage and why, and finish with how you check compliance before submitting.

Example answer

"First I read the request for tender and note the evaluation criteria, weightings, page limits and mandatory requirements. I set up a compliance matrix in Excel and a response template in Word that mirrors the client's structure. Then I hold a kick-off meeting with the bid team, allocate sections and set internal deadlines working backwards from submission. I draft what I can, chase subject matter experts for their input, and edit their answers so they directly address the question. Finally I proofread, format, check compliance, and submit early."

2. Tell me about a time you had to gather technical information from busy subject matter experts who were reluctant to contribute.

Why they ask

Tender writers rarely own the technical content. This assesses your stakeholder management and ability to get accurate information under time pressure.

How to structure your answer

STAR: describe the situation and the expert's reluctance, the task of getting their input, the action you took to make it easy for them, and the result for the bid.

Example answer

"I once needed cost and timeline data from an engineering manager who was on site for a week. I sent a short email with three specific questions and a deadline, then followed up with a five-minute phone call to explain why the tender needed his input. I offered to draft the section based on similar past projects so he only had to confirm or correct. He replied the next day, and we met the deadline."

3. A tender closes in two days and you discover a mandatory compliance requirement has not been addressed. What do you do?

Why they ask

This probes your judgement under pressure and whether you prioritise mandatory requirements over nice-to-have content.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: stay calm, assess the requirement, escalate appropriately, decide on the most practical fix, and document the outcome.

Example answer

"I would immediately flag it to the bid manager and check the tender rules on clarifications. If the requirement is truly mandatory, I would see if we can meet it with existing information or a quick answer from a subject matter expert. If not, I would recommend either not submitting or submitting with a clear explanation if allowed. I would prioritise fixing it over polishing non-mandatory sections, and document what happened for future bids."

4. How do you ensure your writing matches the evaluation criteria and scoring rubric?

Why they ask

This tests your technical understanding of how tenders are actually scored, not just how well you write.

How to structure your answer

Technical explanation: describe your method for translating criteria into a response structure, and give a concrete example.

Example answer

"I break the evaluation criteria into a table with each question and its weighting. Then for every section I check that the response uses the client's language, provides evidence such as past project examples, and covers every sub-point. I also get a colleague to review against the matrix to catch gaps."

5. Describe a situation where you received conflicting feedback from two senior stakeholders on a proposal section. How did you resolve it?

Why they ask

Bid teams involve multiple authorities. This assesses your diplomacy and ability to reach a workable outcome without stalling the deadline.

How to structure your answer

STAR: outline the conflicting feedback, the need to resolve it quickly, the action of facilitating a decision, and the result for the document and relationships.

Example answer

"I had two managers disagree on whether to include a case study that one thought was too old. I listened to both, then suggested we include a shortened version that highlighted the relevant capability but framed it as a past example with a note on how we have since improved. Both agreed, and the tender was submitted on time."

6. What tools and software do you use to manage tender documents and why?

Why they ask

This confirms your practical familiarity with the systems a bid team relies on daily.

How to structure your answer

Practical tool-focused answer: name the tools, explain what you use each for, and connect them to accuracy and deadline control.

Example answer

"I use Microsoft Word for drafting with styles and track changes, Excel for compliance matrices and pricing tables, Adobe PDF for final assembly and bookmarks, and a proposal management tool like [name of RFP software] to track versions and deadlines. I prefer these because they are widely used and make it easy to collaborate and meet formatting rules."