TENDERNOVA

The NZ Tender Submission Guide

5 reasons good businesses lose tenders they should win — plus the pre-submission checklist we use on every proposal.

A free resource from TenderNova — NZ-owned tender and proposal writing specialists.

Before you submit another tender

Most tenders aren't lost because the business isn't good enough — they're lost because the submission doesn't make the case clearly enough for the evaluator. Small, avoidable mistakes cost Kiwi businesses contracts every week.

This guide covers the five most common reasons tenders get rejected, followed by the pre-submission checklist our team runs through on every proposal we write. Use it to sense-check your next submission before it goes in.

Part One

5 Reasons Tenders Get Rejected

1 Not answering the actual question

Evaluators score against specific criteria. If your response talks around the requirement instead of directly addressing it point-by-point, you lose marks — even if the underlying capability is there.

2 Generic, reused content

Evaluators can tell when a response has been lifted from a previous submission. Proposals that aren't tailored to this client, this project, and this criteria consistently score lower.

3 Weak evidence for claims

Saying you're "experienced" or "reliable" means nothing without proof. Specific examples, numbers, and outcomes are what actually move the score.

4 Poor structure and readability

Evaluators are often reading dozens of submissions under time pressure. Dense paragraphs, inconsistent formatting, and buried key points make it harder to score you well — even when the content is strong.

5 Compliance slip-ups

Missing a mandatory attachment, exceeding a word/page limit, or missing a submission deadline detail can disqualify an otherwise winning proposal before it's even scored on merit.

Part Two

The Pre-Submission Checklist

Run through this before you hit submit. It's the same checklist our team uses on every proposal we write.

COMPLIANCE

- [ ] All mandatory forms, declarations and attachments are included
- [ ] Submission meets word count / page limit requirements
- [ ] Formatting matches the specified template (fonts, headings, file type)
- [ ] Submission deadline, time zone and lodgement method are confirmed
- [ ] Referee / reference contact details are current and have been notified

CONTENT & SCORING

- [ ] Every evaluation criterion is directly and explicitly addressed
- [ ] Claims are backed with specific examples, numbers or outcomes
- [ ] Content is tailored to this client and project — not reused generically
- [ ] Pricing and methodology align with what's actually being asked for
- [ ] Risks and mitigations are addressed, not avoided

CLARITY & PRESENTATION

- [ ] Document is easy to skim — clear headings, short paragraphs, no walls of text
- [ ] Executive summary clearly states why you're the right choice
- [ ] Spelling, grammar and consistency have been checked by a second person
- [ ] Visuals (if used) support the content rather than pad the page count

FINAL CHECK

- [ ] Someone outside the writing process has reviewed it fresh
- [ ] Submission has been saved / uploaded well ahead of the deadline
- [ ] Confirmation of successful submission has been received and saved

Want a second set of expert eyes on your next tender?

TenderNova reviews, writes and optimises tender and RFP submissions for Kiwi businesses across every industry — from solo tradies to large-scale contractors. If you'd rather hand the whole process to a specialist team, get in touch for a free consultation.

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