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Author: Mr. alan Pelletier
ESA, The Netherlands

E-RATES: ESTABLISHING SME HOURLY RATES THROUGH STANDARDIZED PROCESSES

Abstract

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, agility and effectiveness are key for a modern and dynamic space agency. In this context, the ESA E-Rates project team, composed of members of the Industrial Audit Office and the SME section o, proposed the creation of "ESA e-Rates" in the frame of the European Space Agency's intrapreneurship initiative "Gravity Assist" E-Rates is intended to be an online tool and simplified process to establish rates which can be used by industry, specifically SMEs, in proposals, contributing to an even more efficient and smooth bidding and evaluation process. When submitting financial proposals to the Agency, industry is required to propose hourly rates and overheads in line with ESA guidelines. Especially for newcomers, establishing rates can be a challenging process which, if done incorrectly, can lead to lengthy negotiations during procurements and an increased manpower effort on ESA side. Companies submitting offers to ESA either have audited rates or rates which are established by the companies themselves. E-Rates is intended to be a way to establish rates through an online tool and a simplified process, verified by the ESA Industrial Auditing team. A full rates audit process requires a significant amount of ESA manpower and can therefore only be performed for a limited number of companies each year. The E-Rates tool is meant to simplify and digitise the new simplified process, enabling SMEs to prepare their offers more quickly. The tool targets SMEs first, allowing them to determine fair and reviewed rates. Companies will benefit from a user-friendly interface as well as helpful notes and explanation materials, making it easier to provide data and to establish rates. ESA, on the other hand, will benefit from having more companies with validated rates for projects in its database. The e-Rates project has been developed in the frame ESA's intrapreneurship initiative with the objective to deliver a minimum viable product by the end of it