

EOI No. KIOCL/MED/ 2020 /634

Dated 04th Nov 2020



KIOCL LIMITED

(A Govt of India Enterprise)

Notified Exploration Agency

**II BLOCK, SARJAPURA ROAD, KORAMANGALA,
BANGALORE -560034**

Notice inviting Expression of Interest (EOI) for

Empanelment of Agencies for

- I. TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY WORKS**
- II. EXPLORATORY DRILLING AND ASSOCIATED WORKS**
- III. GEO PHYSICS WORKS**

Submission of EOI : Open all Working days

1. **BACKGROUND**

KIOCL Limited (HO: II Block, Koramangala, Bangalore-560 034), is a prestigious Mini Rathna Company under Ministry of Steel, Govt. of India.

KIOCL, a Notified Exploration Agency, under second provisio of sub-section (1) of Section (4) of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, is executing various *Mineral Exploration* programs.

KIOCL has a well-established MINERAL EXPLORATION LABORATORY at BF Unit, KIOCL LIMITED, PANAMBUR, MANGALURU (ME LAB) for PREPERATION & ANALYSIS OF MINERAL / ORE / ROCK SAMPLES.

KIOCL is an ISO-9001:2015 (QMS), ISO-14001:2015 (EMS) and ISO 45001:2018 (OHSMS) certified Company.

May please visit Company web site: <http://www.kioclltd.in>, for further details.

2. **INTENT OF INVITING EoI**

- 2.1. KIOCL undertakes exploration works for variety of minerals like iron ore, limestone, gold and associated minerals, manganese etc funded by National Mineral Exploration Trust, Ministry of Mines, GoI and DMG, Govt of Karnataka and so on.
- 2.2. KIOCL Ltd invites Expression of Interest (EoI) from reputed, competent Agencies for empanelment for assisting KIOCL in various Mineral Exploration (ME) activities. The Agencies shall have adequate infrastructure and shall be capable to provide latest and proven mineral exploration service / expertise.
- 2.3. In order to fast track the process of tendering, KIOCL intends to create a 'Resource Pool' of pre-qualified "Empaneled" agencies, for engagement through transparent route,
- 2.4. Categories & Groups of works intended for empanelment are as under.

Category	Groups
I . Topographic Survey Works	01
	02
II. Exploratory Drilling and Associated Works	01
	02
III. Geo Physics Works	-

- 2.5. Agencies can apply for empanelment in any/ all the above indicated category (ies) or group(s), based on their respective area of expertise and financials. Details of prerequisite financial parameters (Total project value (excluding GST)) against each group are provided @ point no 6.3.1 & 6.4.1 of this document.
- 2.6. Agencies empaneled for group-01 shall not be eligible/ invited for participating in the group-02 tender(s) floated by KIOCL.

However, agencies empaneled for group-02 shall be eligible/ invited for participating in the group-01 tender(s) floated by KIOCL.

- 2.7. Interested Agencies may please submit their EoI responses along with necessary documents as indicated.
- 2.8. KIOCL reserves the right to alter / modify or cancel the conditions specified in this Notice inviting EoI.
- 2.9. Addendum / corrigendum if any shall be hosted in the KIOCL website only and no advertisement shall be made in any other media including print.
- 2.10. This notice inviting EoI is not a commercial offer and is issued with no binding commitment.
- 2.11. KIOCL reserves the right to consider / reject any or all applications without assigning any reason whatsoever. Decision of KIOCL shall be final w.r.t short listing of agencies under this EoI.
- 2.12. KIOCL shall have no liability to any Agency applying to this Notice inviting EoI, for any loss, expenses or damage which may arise from or be incurred or suffered in connection with the EoI and empanelment process

3. OBJECTIVE OF INVITING EoI

To solicit applications from the eligible (qualifying pre-qualification criteria as laid down) agencies for empanelment for carrying out various works as listed in the Mineral Exploration programs undertaken by KIOCL in any part of INDIA as per Mines (Evidence of Mineral Contents) Rules-2015 under MM(D&R) Act 1957.

4. METHODOLOGY OF ENGAGEMENT

Whenever need arises for out sourcing any specific work, KIOCL depending on the ME Project needs, derive a “Scope of Work”, and other terms and conditions, float a Limited Tender Enquiry amongst the empaneled agencies, to identify the agency to execute the works.

5. TENURE OF EMPANELMENT

The empanelment shall be up to 31st Dec 2025.

Empaneled Agency is required to continue to maintain qualification requirements of this EoI notice, through-out the Tenure.

Repeated nonparticipation in THREE (03) consecutive Limited Tender Enquiry for works by the empaneled Agency without valid reason may force KIOCL to revoke the empanelment. The reason of “overloaded with works at other Projects” shall not be considered valid as the Agencies are required to execute ME Works in multi frontiers being empaneled.

Engagement as Empaneled Agency can be terminated / renewed further for a period, subject to fulfilment of eligibility criteria and performance during the Tenure.

6. **ELIGIBILITY (Pre-Qualification (PQ) CRITERIA**

PQ criteria assessment shall be for the period up to 31st March of the immediately previous Financial Year, w.r.t the date of application.

6.1. Agency **should** be

- an individual person having sole proprietorship / a registered partnership firm / Company (private or public).
- Recorded average annual turnover of minimum of Rs. 5.0 Lakhs from the last 3 financial years, i.e., 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 for Category-I and III works.
- Recorded average annual turnover of minimum of Rs. 50.0 Lakhs from the last 3 financial years, i.e., 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 for Category- II works.
- Recorded with positive net worth in previous Financial Year.

6.2. Joint Venture or MoU or Consortium of firms/ companies / individuals/ Proprietorship are **STRICTLY NOT ALLOWED**. However, at the time of seeking tender, individual empaneled agency may be permitted to bid in JV / Consortium with not more than one other(non-empaneled) agency.

6.3. **Category I: Topographic Survey Works**

Agency should,

6.3.1. During previous 07 years, successfully have executed / completed at least 02 (two) Topographic / Contour Survey Works of self or any reputed organization, with the cumulative amount as indicated below

Group	Cumulative Amount in Rs (Excluding GST)
01	Upto 1.0 lakh
02	More than 1.0 lakh

6.3.2. Said experience shall be in any mineral bearing area / ME Project / Mine Planning or Development or Production using DGPS /Total Station (TS) instruments including

- Interpretation of field data and preparation of Topographic / Contour map, Surface Plans/Sections, etc.,
- Preparation of survey reports supplemented with Geological Mapping Details
- preparation of approach road plan to borehole /trial pit or trench locations.
- Transfer of Bore Hole /trial pit or trench / techno-geological survey points and approach road alignments on to ground by DGPS /TS Survey method, subject to site conditions, by carrying out survey works
- Preparation of Topography and Contour Survey Report supplemented with Maps, plans in specified scale as per guidelines to define the geometry of Mineral bearing Blocks using software's like AutoCAD /ARC GIS /Surpac.

6.3.3. Have experience in liasioning with stake holders for effective and timely execution of field survey works,

- 6.3.4. Possess suitable expertise in advanced survey techniques using Drone/ LIDAR/ Hyperspectral Technologies, etc., as a desirable qualification,
- 6.3.5. Have at least One qualified Surveyor on roll.
- 6.3.6. Owned at least 01 set of DGPS (Base station and Rover) or TS Survey equipment
- 6.3.7. Have suitable processing and operating Software and suitable capacity scanners and printers and experienced operating / processing personnel
- 6.3.8. The equipment / machines shall not be older than 10 (ten) years as on 31st March, immediately prior to date of application.
- 6.3.9. Furnish documents in evidence as per Annexure-III -A

6.4. Category II: Exploratory Drilling and Associated Works

Agency should,

- 6.4.1. During previous 07 years, successfully have executed / completed at least 02 (two) core drilling and associated works of self or any reputed organization of any mineral bearing area / ME Project / Mine Planning or Development or Production with the cumulative amount as indicated below

Group	Cumulative Amount in Rs (Excluding GST)
01	Upto 30 lakhs
02	More than 30 lakhs

- 6.4.2. Have experience in liaising with stake holders for effective and timely execution of field works.
- 6.4.3. Having suitable expertise in Reverse-circulation (RC) drilling is desirable.
- 6.4.4. Possess at least 02 (two) core drill rigs with capacity to drill H/N series bore hole, up to a depth of 500m in soft to hard formation, of own or under suitable hire / lease agreement (valid for not less than Three years as on date of application), to deploy as and when required. The machines shall not be older than 10 (ten)years as on 31st March, immediately prior to date of application.
- 6.4.5. Furnish documents in evidence, as per Annexure-III -B

6.5. Category III: Geo Physics Works

Agency should,

- 6.5.1. During previous 07 years, successfully executed / completed at least 02 (two), Geophysical investigation Field/ Interpretation Works in any geological

formations of any mineral bearing area / ME Project / Mine for self or any reputed organization.

6.5.2. Said experience shall be in any mineral bearing area / ME Project / Mine Planning or Development or Production including

- Providing independent due diligence in any ME Project on Geo physical investigation
- Study of available geological data and field reconnaissance for selection of suitable geophysical study mechanism
- Collection of available Aero /Ground geophysical primary / processed data from authentic source centers
- Interpretation of available Aero /Ground geophysical primary / processed data for delineation of anomaly zones of geological importance including 2D and 3D modelling
- Planning and execution of suggested Geophysical tools such as Airborne Geophysics (Magnetic / Gravity / Electromagnetic. Gravity gradiometric) or Ground Geophysics (Magnetic, Gravity, Self - Potential / Induced Polarization / Electric Resistivity / Electro Magnetic / Seismic Surveys(individually or in combination) by
 - selecting total area/ designing grid - station interval / signal and precision levels and time intervals etc
 - Systematic collection of geophysical data.
 - Detect and analyze the geophysical signals for the core of Geophysical signal processing.
 - Profiling / imaging, borehole geophysical logging
 - Overlay studies in GIS platform.
 - Interpretation of geophysical maps in conjunction with the geology, identification of anomalies (geophysical signatures and their decoding)
 - Digitization of ore body/mineral bearing zones in specified contour/topo map.
 - Generation of Digital terrain/ elevation model based on the contours/ channel anomalies in specified scale.
- Process / analyze the data to provide basic geological information on the distribution of lithological units and structures, augmenting the understanding and delimitation of mineral potential zones,
- Identify geologically potential zones by interpretation and correlation of combination of data sets from studies of Surface Geology, Geochemical and Geophysical to prepare 2D / 3D Geo physical Survey Models and Geological Report

6.5.3. suitable expertise in advanced Geo-Physical techniques and as desirable qualification,

6.5.4. Possess at least 02 (two) sets of geo physics instruments, each of different core technology , of own or under suitable hire / lease agreement (valid for not less than Three years as on date of application), to deploy as and when required. The equipment shall not be older than 05 (five)years as on 31st March, immediately prior to date of application

- 6.5.5. Suitable application software, tools and tackles either on own or under suitable hire / lease agreement (valid for not less than Three years as on date of application), to deploy as and when required as to record / interpret and report the work. The infrastructure shall not be older than 05 (five) years as on 31st March, immediately prior to date of application
- 6.5.6. Have at least 01 no of experienced, qualified Geophysicist on roll.
- 6.5.7. Furnish documents in evidence, as per Annexure-III -C

7. MSME's:

While seeking the tender, KIOCL reserves the option to give a preference to the offers received from MSME Units, in accordance with the policies of the Govt. from time-to-time. For more details please visit our website link <http://kioclltd.in/downloads/EMPANELMENT-OF-MSEs.pdf> . In case of SSIs /MSEs Firms need to submit notarized copies of the relevant, valid registration certificates and/or Udyog Aadhar Memorandum (UAM) Number for claiming exemption.

8. EOI Application Fee and availability of EOI documents

Notice Inviting EOI - Document can be downloaded from websites www.kioclltd.in & www.eprocure.gov.in .

A non- refundable Application Fee of Rs. 1,180/- (Rupees One Thousand One Hundred Eighty) only, i.e., Rs.1,000/- plus 18% GST, per category shall be payable. MSE's / SSIs are exempted from payment of EoI document fee. However, SSIs /MSEs Firms need to submit notarized copies of the relevant, valid registration certificates and/or Udyog Aadhar Memorandum (UAM) Number for claiming exemption.

As there shall not be any communication henceforth in print media or elsewhere, interested/Agency (ies) are requested and required to continuously follow www.kioclltd.in for any updates on this Notice inviting EOI, addendum, corrigendum etc.

9. Information to be submitted by Agencies

Agencies are required to submit following documentary evidence and annexures towards fulfillment of the Terms and Conditions herein.

- 9.1. Proof of payment of EOI Document Fee.
- 9.2. Letter of Undertaking in format as at Annexure – I.
- 9.3. Agencies Profile including Contact details as per Annexure – II
- 9.4. Copy of MSME registration certificate if applicable
- 9.5. Copies of Work Orders along with Work Completion Certificates for successful completion of works as specified in the PQ Criteria
- 9.6. Evidence of capacity and ownership/hire or lease Deeds/Agreements, etc, for equipment / infrastructure specified for RESPECTIVE CATEGORY mineral exploration works.
- 9.7. Financial Statements, for annual Turnover depicting contribution of respective category of works in the Balance Sheet and Net Worth, certified by Statutory Auditor / Chartered Accountant with UDIN number.

- 9.8. Manpower details with qualification, experience, and proof of identity
- 9.9. Work execution details as per Annexure – III – A / B/ C.

All the above prescribed documents duly signed by authorized signatory with official seal shall be kept in an envelope and super – scribed as “**EMPANELEMENT OF MINERAL EXPLORATION AGENCIES**”– **CATEGORY- I/II/III** and addressed to

Deputy General Manager (ME)
Mineral Exploration Dept,
KIOCL Limited, II Block,
Koramangala,
Bangalore 560 034, e-Mail: bmed@kioclltd.com
phone: (LL)080 25531461 (extn: 399/394/393/392/391)
(m) 9900789115

While processing the EoI Proposal, KIOCL may seek further clarification and documentary evidence. Agencies are requested to provide the same early for effective processing.

10. Instruction to Agencies

- 10.1. During Limited tender enquiry (LTE) process, KIOCL reserves the rights to curtail / add on and / or modify any items indicated against Pre-Qualification criteria of this Notice inviting EoI
- 10.2. Agencies should apply on the prescribed formats as per Annexure-I to Annexure-III of application for Empanelment along-with documentary evidence.
- 10.3. Experience in ME works should be supported by certificates or equivalent. In case the work experience of other than Govt./Semi Govt./ PSUs, the Completion Certificate shall be supported with copies of Work Order executed duly certified by Statutory Auditor / Chartered Accountant.
- 10.4. All the EoI proposals received, will be evaluated on the basis of information and documents provided by the Agency. In case the evidence are not found sufficient / suitable, such applications shall not be considered.
- 10.5. All information called for in the enclosed forms should be furnished against the relevant columns. If information is furnished on a separate sheet, this fact should be mentioned against the relevant column. Even if no information is to be provided in a column, a ‘NIL’ or ‘NO SUCH CASE’ entry should be made in that column. If any particulars / query is not applicable in case of the Agency, it should be stated as “not applicable”. The Agencies are cautioned that not giving complete information called for in the application forms or not giving it in clear terms or making any change in the prescribed forms or deliberately suppressing the information may result in the Agency being rejected.
- 10.6. Applications made by telex, e-Mail, and those received without document fees will not be entertained. However, additional evidence called for by e-Mail during processing, shall be supported with hard copies subsequently.
- 10.7. Agency should sign and stamp each page of the application. Overwriting should be avoided. Correction, if any, should be made by neatly crossing out, initialing, dating and rewriting.
- 10.8. Agency may furnish any additional information which may be necessary to establish capabilities. Agencies are however, advised not to furnish superfluous information.

No information shall be entertained after submission of pre-qualification documents unless it is called for by KIOCL.

- 10.9. Any information furnished by Agency found to be incorrect either immediately or later, would render the Agency liable to be debarred from prequalification / revoking empanelment. If such Agency happens to be pre – qualified / empaneled in more than one category its name shall be removed from all the categories of the pre-qualified list of Agencies.

11. Evaluation of Applications and Procedure for empanelment

- 11.1. Applications received against each category shall be scrutinized and evaluated internally and qualified Agencies will be issued Empanelment Certificate for the respective category.
- 11.2. This empanelment is for generating list of prospective agencies and keeping them on KIOCL's panel for carrying out mineral exploration works in India. This will enable the company to seek quote from the empaneled agencies by giving very short notice for submission of bids. On empanelment, whenever need arises, for the specific requirement or specific scope of work, Limited tender enquiry (LTE) shall be floated among the Empaneled Agencies. Acceptance of bids, evaluation of offers received, and placement of order will be as per the terms and conditions laid down in the Limited tender enquiry (LTE).
- 11.3. The empanelled agencies shall be required to submit Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and Security Deposit (SD) as per the terms laid down in LTE.

12. Decision making Authority

KIOCL reserve the right to modify the eligibility criteria, to decide on cut-off date of implementation, to accept or reject any application, to annul the PRE-QUALIFICATION process, to reject all applications or accept new applications at any time, without assigning any reason or incurring any liability to the Agencies. This empanelment shall not be binding on KIOCL for any liability till the award of contract.

13. Authority to submit

A person signing the EOI application or any documents forming part thereof on behalf of the Agencies shall be deemed to warrant that he has the requisite authority to sign such document. A Copy of Power of Attorney for the authorized signatory for signing of application shall be submitted along with EOI. If, subsequently it is revealed that the person so signing has no authority to do so, KIOCL may, without prejudice to any other civil and criminal remedies, cancel the empanelment and hold the signatory liable for all costs and damages.

14. Validity of EoI application

Applications submitted in response to this Notice inviting EoI, should be valid for minimum of 180 (one hundred eighty) days from the date of submission. EOI's with inadequate validity will be rejected.

15. Confidentiality

All the data / information, shall be “Strictly Confidential”, in any form,

- provided by KIOCL to the Agency and vice-versa,
- after being empaneled, generated during engagement for any ME Work,
- interpreted / reported in connection with any ME work

The empaneled Agency shall ensure data integrity throughout the Tenure and beyond and shall not disclose / share with any other person / organization at any time without consent in writing from KIOCL

16. Fraud Prevention Policy

Everyone may take note that a “Fraud Prevention Policy” is being followed by KIOCL, which provides a system for prevention/detection/reporting of any fraud. It also forbids everyone from involvement in any fraudulent activity and that where any fraudulent activity is suspected by anyone, the matter must be reported to the ‘Nodal Officer’ (Chief Vigilance Officer) as soon as he / she comes to know of any fraud or suspected fraud. KIOCL requires that Agencies under this contract observe the highest standard of ethics during the execution of this contract.

17. Contact Address for Further Information

Any clarification / request for further information regarding this EoI should be directed to the following address:

The Deputy General Manager (ME),
Mineral Exploration Department,
KIOCL Limited,
II Block, Koramangala, Bangalore -560 034
e-Mail address: bmed@kioclltd.com

Yours faithfully,
For KIOCL Limited,

-Sd-
Deputy General Manager (ME)

ANNEXURE-I**LETTER OF UNDERTAKING**

(To be submitted in Agency's letter head)

To,

The Deputy General Manager (ME)
Mineral Exploration Department,
KIOCL Limited, II Block, Koramangala,
Bangalore -560 034

Sir,

1. We have read the terms and conditions and other documents under Notice inviting Expression of Interest, No. KIOCL/MED/ dtd 00.10.2019 for empanelment of agencies for carrying out mineral exploration works. We hereby submit our qualification and relevant documents for empanelment under following Category(ies) and Group(s).

Category	Groups	Select the relevant option
I . Topographic Survey Works	01	Yes /No
	02	Yes /No
II. Exploratory Drilling and Associated Works	01	Yes /No
	02	Yes /No
III. Geo Physics Works	-	Yes /No

2. We have furnished all information and details necessary for qualification. We hereby certify that all the statements made, and information supplied in the enclosed Annexures 'II' to 'V' and accompanying statements are true and correct.

Our offer is valid for a period of 180 days from the date of our EoI application

3. We authorize the KIOCL LIMITED or their representatives to approach individuals, employers, firms, and corporations to verify our submittals, competency, and general reputation. The decision of KIOCL regarding our prequalification shall be final and binding on us.

Yours faithfully,

(Seal and Signature of the agency)

ANNEXURE-II
AGENCIES' PROFILE

(To be submitted in Agency's letter head)

1. Place of registration
2. Principal place of business
3. Name, address, and contact nos of Directors and Principal office
4. Total revenue in INR (in last FY years).
5. Nature of business.
6. Power of attorney for the authorized signatory for submission of bid.
7. Name of the contact person with designation, address, telephone, telex, fax, email etc.
8. Bank details for RTGS/NEFT.
9. Details of the experience of team leader & other team members (Geologists, Geophysists, Mining , Drilling, Electrical, Mechanical Engineers, Field Managers, Staff and Operators)

Sl.No	Name of the Team leader & other team members proposed for this assignment	Qualification of the Team leader & other team member proposed for this assignment	No. of years' experience	Role in the present assignment Team leader/ team member	Details of past association
1					
2					
3					
4					
5 and so on					

Yours Faithfully,

Place:

Date:

Authorized Signatory

Seal of the Firm

WORK EXECUTION DETAILS
CATEGORY I – TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY WORKS
a) EXPERIENCE

Sl	Name & Address of Client	Brief description of work / Extent / Contour Interval	Work Order Number & Date / Completion Date	Work Order Value (Rs), (excluding GST)	Remarks
Works Completed					
1					
2					
3					
Work in hand					
1					
2					
3					

b) Equipment and Infrastructure

Sl	Name	Make / model /Year of Manufacture	Technology / Software support	Own /hire	Remarks
Field Equipment					
1					
2					
3					
Office infrastructure					
1					
2					
3					

c) Manpower

Sl	Name	Experience in brief	Professional Qualifications	Identity Document	Remarks
Technical / Survey					
1					
2					
3					
Managerial / Non-Technical					
1					
2					
3					

d) Financial Information (to be certified by the Statutory Auditor / Chartered Accountant)

Sl	Financial Year	Turnover (Rs.)	Turnover (Rs.) from Topographic Survey Works	Net Worth(Rs.)	Remarks
1					
2					
3					

Place:

Date:

 Yours Faithfully,
 Authorized Signatory

Seal of the Firm

CATEGORY II – EXPLORATORY DRILLING AND ASSOCIATED WORKS
a) EXPERIENCE

Sl.No	Name & Address of Client	Brief description of work / Mineral Commodity-Strata / Meterage(m)	Work Order Number & Date / Completion Date	Work Order Value (in Rs excluding Taxes or GST), %age Executed	Remarks
Works Completed					
1					
2					
3					
Works in hand					
1					
2					
3					

b) Equipment and Infrastructure

Sl.No	Name	Make / model /Year of Manufacture	Technology	Own /hire	Remarks
Field Equipment					
1					
2					
3					
Ancillary Infrastructure					
1					
2					
3					

c) Manpower

Sl.No	Name	Experience in brief	Professional Qualifications	Identity Document	Remarks
Technical /Engineering/ Operations					
1					
2					
3					
Managerial / Non-Technical					
1					
2					
3	-				

d) Financial Information (to be certified by the Statutory Auditor / Chartered Accountant)

Sl.No	Financial Year	Turnover (Rs.)	Turnover (Rs.) from Core Drilling & Associated Works / %age	Net Worth (Rs.)	Remarks
1					
2					
3					

Yours Faithfully,

Place:

Authorized Signatory

Date:

Seal of the Firm

**CATEGORY III – GEO PHYSICS WORKS
EXPERIENCE**

Sl.No	Name & Address of Client	Brief description of work /Technology / Extent / Mineral - Strata	Work Order Number & Date / Completion Date	Work Order Value (in Rs excluding Taxes or GST), %age Executed	Remarks
Works Completed					
1					
2					
3					
Work in hand					
1					
2					
3					

a) Equipment and Infrastructure

Sl.No	Name	Make / model /Year of Manufacture	Technology / Software support	Own /hire	Remarks
Field Equipment					
1					
2					
3					
Office infrastructure					
1					
2					
3					

b) Manpower

Sl.No	Name	Experience in brief	Professional Qualifications	Identity Document	Remarks
Technical / Geophysicist / Geologist					
1					
2					
3					
Managerial / Non-Technical					
1					
2					
3					

c) Financial Information (to be certified by the Statutory Auditor / Chartered Accountant)

Sl.No	Financial Year	Turnover (Rs.)	Turnover (Rs.) from Geophysicist Works / %age	Net Worth(Rs.)	Remarks
1					
2					
3					

Yours Faithfully,

Place:

Authorized Signatory

Date:

Seal of the Firm