

How to Evaluate a Background-Screening Proposal

A practical 100-point framework for procurement, HR, compliance, security and legal teams evaluating vendors or running an RFP.

Executive Summary

A defensible procurement process answers three core questions before price ever enters the conversation.

1

Lawful & reliable delivery

Can the provider lawfully and reliably deliver the checks required in every relevant country?

2

Data protection & supply chain

Can it protect candidate data and control who in its supply chain can access it?

3

True operational fit

Can it meet operational needs at the quoted price — not just present the lowest headline fee?

THE CENTRAL PRINCIPLE

Evaluate evidence, not assurances. Unsupported statements such as “global coverage,” “fast turnaround,” “compliant,” or “secure” should not score the same as documented, independently verified capability.

IMPORTANT

This framework supports procurement and risk assessment — it is not legal advice. Screening scope, consent, permitted sources, reportable information and retention requirements differ by jurisdiction and role.

Pass / Fail Gates & the 100-Point Scorecard

Some failures should not be offset by price or presentation. Clear gates first — then score everything else on a weighted 100-point scale.

PASS / FAIL PROCUREMENT GATES

- ✓ Lawful delivery of every mandatory check
- ✓ Acceptable DPA & cross-border transfer mechanism
- ✓ Disclosure of material subcontractors & data sources
- ✓ Minimum security controls evidenced
- ✓ Adequate insurance & financial stability
- ✓ Breach, audit, deletion & exit obligations accepted
- ✓ No material misrepresentation
- ✓ Legal, privacy, security & compliance review passed

100-POINT SCORECARD — CATEGORY WEIGHTS

Legal, regulatory & methodology	18
Security, privacy & data governance	18
Geographic coverage & source quality	14
Service delivery, TAT & quality	14
Technology, integration & reporting	10
Commercials & total cost of ownership	10
Candidate & client experience	8
Implementation & resilience	8

TOTAL

100 PTS

Scoring Scale & Decision Thresholds

Weighted score = (vendor score ÷ 5) × category weight. Score current capability only — never a roadmap promise.

SCORING SCALE (0–5)

0	Unacceptable	Requirement not met or omitted
1	Major weakness	Largely manual or unproven
2	Partially meets	Some capability, important gaps
3	Meets requirement	Adequate, documented capability
4	Exceeds requirement	Strong, evidenced capability
5	Leading capability	Superior, contractually committed

SUGGESTED DECISION THRESHOLDS

Gate failed	Do not proceed w/o a documented remediation plan
< 60 / 100	Material gaps — normally exclude
60–69 / 100	Viable only with remediation & stronger controls
70–79 / 100	Meets requirements; compare risk & cost carefully
80–89 / 100	Strong proposal, good supporting evidence
90–100 / 100	Exceptional — validate score isn't inflated

Consider category floors too: no shortlisted provider should score below 3/5 in legal/methodology or security/privacy.

Legal Methodology & Geographic Coverage

18 PTS

Legal, Regulatory & Screening Methodology

- ✓ Permissible screening scope by jurisdiction and role
- ✓ Consent or other required authorisation
- ✓ Identity and name-matching methodology
- ✓ Sources and verification routes
- ✓ Verified facts vs. source responses vs. database matches
- ✓ Discrepancy, clarification and correction process
- ✓ Review process for adverse findings
- ✓ Legal and regulatory change management
- ✓ Support for regulated-sector requirements

Evidence: methodology statements, redacted sample reports, consent workflows, reinvestigation procedures

WATCH FOR: “Global criminal check” sold as one uniform product with no identifiable source or verification route.

14 PTS

Geographic Coverage & Source Quality

- ✓ Can it deliver every required check in each hiring & candidate-history country?
- ✓ Delivery via owned team, affiliate, vetted local partner, or aggregator?
- ✓ Source type used for each check?
- ✓ Source limitations & record coverage explained?
- ✓ Local languages, scripts, name conventions & documentation supported?
- ✓ Handles institutional fees, notarisation, translations, candidate documents?
- ✓ Country-specific turnaround based on actual performance?
- ✓ How decentralised / non-digitised-record countries are handled?

Evidence: country-and-check coverage matrix, source disclosure, actual TAT performance

WATCH FOR: Coverage stated only as a country count, or one turnaround promise applied to every country and check type.

Security & Privacy, Service Delivery & Quality

18 PTS

Information Security, Privacy & Data Governance

- ✓ Current ISO/IEC 27001 certification or equivalent, and its scope
- ✓ Encryption in transit and at rest
- ✓ MFA, least privilege and role-based access
- ✓ Logging, vulnerability scanning, penetration testing, patching
- ✓ Production/test environment separation
- ✓ Data storage/backup locations & cross-border transfers
- ✓ Subprocessor access, retention and deletion standards
- ✓ Incident response, notification & data-subject rights
- ✓ AI use and human oversight

Evidence: certificates & scope, pen-test summary, subprocessor register, data-location schedule, BCP/DR results

WATCH FOR: Relies solely on a cloud host's certification, or candidate data is retained indefinitely "for future use."

14 PTS

Service Delivery, Turnaround & Quality Assurance

- ✓ Define when the TAT clock starts
- ✓ Separate provider-controlled from source/candidate-controlled delays
- ✓ Review median, 90th percentile & completion-within-SLA measures
- ✓ Segment SLAs by country and check type
- ✓ Review incomplete-information & non-response handling
- ✓ Understand QA process before report release
- ✓ Review adverse-result escalation process
- ✓ Ask for error, rework, complaint & correction rates
- ✓ Confirm named escalation roles & response times

Evidence: 6–12 months of performance data, SLA + sample monthly report, QA methodology, escalation matrix

WATCH FOR: Only "average TAT" is supplied, or extremely fast completion is promised despite slow primary sources.

Technology, Candidate Experience & Implementation

10 PTS

Technology, Integration & Reporting

- ✓ Secure ordering and candidate data collection
- ✓ Status tracking, document exchange and reporting
- ✓ Role-based access, SSO, MFA and audit trails
- ✓ Production-ready ATS/HRIS/API integration
- ✓ API auth, retries, errors, change management
- ✓ Consolidated, entity-level reporting & export
- ✓ Mobile, accessibility and multilingual support

Test: scripted demo — create candidate, trigger missing-info workflow, escalate, export MI.

8 PTS

Candidate & Client Experience

- ✓ Clear, mobile-friendly candidate journey
- ✓ Transparent explanation of information requested
- ✓ Country/check-specific document requests
- ✓ Save-progress & reminder functionality
- ✓ Suitable support hours and channels
- ✓ Secure correction / challenge process
- ✓ Measured complaint & escalation performance

Evidence: journey demo, satisfaction results, complaint trend data.

8 PTS

Implementation, Governance & Resilience

- ✓ Named implementation manager & credible plan
- ✓ Pilot, UAT and controlled rollout
- ✓ Migration of packages, workflows & historical cases
- ✓ Training and change support
- ✓ Ongoing governance cadence
- ✓ Financial stability & continuity arrangements
- ✓ Exit plan: data export, transition, deletion

Evidence: implementation RACI, DR test summary, client references.

Commercials & the Evaluator Worksheet

10 PTS

Commercials & Total Cost of Ownership

ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST

Unit charges + mandatory third-party fees + platform/account fees + implementation/integration + expected exceptions + internal operating cost

WHAT TO CLARIFY

- ✓ Package content — what is included in each check and package?
- ✓ Fixed fees — minimum commitments, platform & account fees
- ✓ Third-party costs — court, institution, translation, courier fees
- ✓ Exceptions — unable-to-verify, duplicate & supplementary checks
- ✓ Pricing basis — country, currency, contract year, volume
- ✓ Exit — transition and termination costs

WARNING SIGNS

Pricing marked “at cost” with no cap, low base prices that exclude common fees, unclear price-adjustment mechanisms, or service credits as the sole remedy for security failures.

READY-TO-USE EVALUATOR WORKSHEET

Copy for each shortlisted vendor — score capability, not price.

Category	Wt	Score	Wtd.
Legal & methodology	18		
Geographic coverage	14		
Security & privacy	18		
Service delivery & TAT	14		
Technology & reporting	10		
Candidate experience	8		
Implementation	8		
Commercials & TCO	10		
Total	100		

How to Run a Fair Evaluation

Process matters as much as the scorecard itself.

1

Use a cross-functional panel

Include HR/TA, procurement, privacy/legal, information security, compliance, HR technology and representative business users.

2

Separate technical and commercial evaluation

Assess capability and risk before price is allowed to dominate the process.

3

Moderate scores as a group

Discuss material differences between evaluators and retain the final rationale.

4

Validate high-risk claims

Use due diligence, references, scripted demonstrations and, where appropriate, a pilot.

5

Convert winning claims into the contract

Material promises should become contractual or implementation obligations — not just proposal text.

Common Procurement Mistakes

Giving price too much weight

Factor in delays, rework, breaches & unreliable results as part of total value.

Treating all checks as commodities

Compare sources, permissions, limitations and TAT like-for-like.

Accepting global claims without country detail

Require country-specific methodology, source, TAT and fees.

Leaving exit planning until the end

Define data export, transition and secure deletion before award.

FINAL TAKEAWAY

The right provider is not necessarily the bidder with the longest country list, fastest headline turnaround, or lowest unit price.

A documented scorecard makes the decision more consistent and defensible — and forces the buying team to define its true requirements before marketing claims and price pressure take over.