

# **A Suppliers' Guide to Selling to the Council**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Guide is designed to provide advice and help to current and potential suppliers so that they can make effective use of the procurement opportunities presented by the Council.
- 1.2 The Council adopts a fair and transparent approach to all its procurement activities and will ensure that all suppliers are treated fairly when procuring its requirements.
- 1.3 The Council follows relevant public procurement legislation when procuring its contracts. It also has its own Contract Procedure Rules, which are available to view on the Council's website [here](#).
- 1.4 These Rules detail the processes and governance that the Council has in place to ensure that its communities and residents receive high quality services which represent value for money.
- 1.5 Our procurements also support the Council's delivery of its priorities, these can be found in the Council's Business Plan [here](#).

## 2. Our Procurement Processes

### **Contract Value below £25,000**

- 2.1 At this value the Council does not need to advertise its procurement, we will seek quotes to ensure best value and we may choose to advertise. Our contracts valued over £5,000 are on the Council's Contract Register available [here](#).
- 2.2 It is worth looking at the contracts the Council has in your area of expertise and letting the Contract Manager know you would be interested in providing a quote next time the contract is due for renewal.

### **Contract Value over £25,000 but below £100,000**

- 2.3 These procurements will be advertised on Contracts Finder and our e tendering portal, please see below for further information. The process will be a formal Request for Quotation using our standard template documents.

### **Contract value over £100,000**

- 2.4 Procurements at this value are also advertised on Contracts Finder and our e tendering portal and an open tender process will be used using our standard template documents.
- 2.5 If the value is over the [UK Procurement Threshold](#), then the procurement will also be advertised on the Find a Tender Service. At this value, the Council has several procurement process options available to them.

## 3. Finding out about contract opportunities

- 3.1. Contracts Finder and Find A Tender are two government procurement portals used by the Council to advertise its contracts and opportunities. You can use these portals to:
  - Search for contract opportunities.
  - Receive alerts for new opportunities.
  - Link to other procurement portals to submit your tenders.
  - View future opportunities and market testing.

3.2. During your registration on these portals (which is free of charge) you will be asked to choose the categories of procurement you are interested in. Its important that you choose the categories relevant to your business to receive useful tender alerts.

- [Contracts Finder - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- [Find high value contracts in the public sector - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

3.3. The Council also uses ProContract to manage its procurements, this is an electronic tendering system which allows those suppliers who are registered on the site to download tender documents and submit tender responses. You will need to be registered to access tender details. ProContract can be accessed [here](#) and we have produced a User Guide for suppliers which is available [here](#).

#### 4. Tendering for Contracts

4.1. The Council goes through a number of steps when choosing and appointing a supplier:

- Step 1: **We tell suppliers about a contract opportunity** by either issuing an email inviting a quote (where the requirement is low value, below £25,000) or by advertising the procurement (as described above).
- Step 2: Depending on the value of the contract, **the Council will either issue a Request for Quotation (RFQ) or Invitation to Tender (ITT)**. Both are detailed and contain clear instructions on how to respond. The documents are designed to help the Council make an informed decision about which supplier is making them the best offer in terms of quality, social value and price. The documents will also ask about the suitability, experience and financial stability of the supplier. In an ITT, you will find Standard Selection questions designed to assess the capability of the supplier to deliver the contract, these include mandatory and discretionary exclusion criteria.

4.2. Both the RFQ and the ITT will include details of the requirement for that particular contract including:

- A description of the services, supplies or works being procured (specification).
- The procurement timetable including the deadline for quotation/tender submissions.
- Details on how to submit the quote or tender.
- Terms and conditions of contract.
- Evaluation criteria.
- Pricing mechanism.

**Step 3: Submission of response and evaluation.** The instructions for submitting quotes or tenders will be included within the documentation issued. Your response must be submitted in line with those instructions and by the closing date and time otherwise it may be rejected. All quotes and tenders will be checked against the criteria set out in the procurement documents and evaluated in the way detailed in the documents issued.

**Step 4: Contract Award.** The Council will inform all suppliers who have bid for a particular opportunity what the outcome of the process is. Where the tender is over the UK Procurement Threshold, the Council is required to observe a 10-day standstill period before awarding the contract.

- 4.3. Unsuccessful suppliers are entitled to receive feedback on the outcome of the procurement process and contract award including how their submission was scored in comparison to the successful supplier. The Council will not disclose any commercially sensitive information as part of this process.
- 4.4. Successful suppliers will then be invited to enter into a contract based on the terms and conditions issued as part of the RFQ or ITT.

## **5. Contract Management**

- 5.1. Suppliers will be monitored to ensure they meet the requirements of the contract. The RFQ or ITT and terms and conditions will set out how contract management will take place and what will happen if the contract is not being delivered as required.

## **6. Framework Agreements and Dynamic Purchasing Agreements (DPSs)**

- 6.1. For certain requirements, the Council may set up or use framework agreements or DPSs. Under these, the Council can 'call off' its requirements by running a further competition or in some cases by making a direct award.
- 6.2. Where the Council sets up its own framework or DPS, the selection of suppliers will be made using a process advertised as detailed above. Once a supplier has a place on a framework or DPS, they would then normally bid for work via a further competition.
- 6.3. The Council also uses frameworks from other buying consortiums including ESPO, YPO and the Crown Commercial Service. These frameworks can help us to achieve best value for our requirements.

[Becoming a supplier \(espo.org\)](https://www.espo.org)

[How to sell through CCS - CCS \(crowncommercial.gov.uk\)](https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk)

<https://www.ypo.co.uk/suppliers>

## **7. Provider Selection Regime**

- 7.1. The Provider Selection Regime (PSR) came into force on 1 January 2024.
- 7.2. The PSR is a different set of rules for procuring health care services that the Authority must follow when procuring related contracts under this Act.
- 7.3. Further details around the PSR's can be found here:  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/how-commissioning-is-changing/nhs-provider-selection-regime/>

## **8. Social Value**

- 8.1. The Council is committed to delivering additional value through its procurement activity. Where a procurement is valued over £100,000, we will seek to embed social value in that procurement wherever possible. This means that suppliers will be asked to deliver additional, relevant social value alongside their delivery of the key contractual requirements.

- 8.2. How social value will be delivered will depend on the nature of the contract, but to learn more about the indicators we use, please access the document here:  
<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/cc-c-toms-core-light-2022.pdf>

## 9. Dos and Don'ts for Tendering

### Do

- Read all the documents carefully to check you are capable of delivering the contract.
- Check the deadline for submission, you will not be given extra time.
- Ask clarification questions via the guidance in the RFQ or ITT if you are not sure about anything in the documents.
- Answer all the questions clearly, providing the information asked for.
- Be aware of any limitations on words and attachments.
- Cost your tender as accurately as possible.

### Don't

- Leave completing your submission until the last minute, late submissions will not be accepted.
- Include literature or brochures that haven't been expressly asked for. They won't form part of the evaluation process.
- Assume we already know you; tender evaluation is only based on what is written in your submission.
- Submit unsustainable prices that are undeliverable.
- Forget to send all the documents asked for.