

Doing business with The Council

Local councils' buying power generates a significant amount of work in the construction industry. Procurement plays a vital role in selecting the most efficient suppliers and the best value for money quotes.

Supplier diversity and the engagement of small businesses in the large construction projects is encouraged by the UK legislation and many organisations go that way. Main reasons for 'SME's friendly' procurement are:

- Familiarity with local area
- Local knowledge
- Proximity of labourers to site

- Flexibility
- More competition and better value for money
- Better range of solutions
- Access to wider range of suppliers

Small companies find the process involved in tendering for public sector contracts difficult. Two main problems are a lack of access to information about tenders and difficulties in demonstrating compliance at the first stage of the procurement process.

The most common barriers that suppliers come up with while engaging the small businesses are:

- SMEs are often put off by complex tendering process
- Perceived as the higher risk option
- Lack of SMEs capacity, tracks records
- Perceived lack of advanced business procedures
- Lower level of insurance
- Lack of financial records and history
- Perceived as a higher risk
- Perceived lack of knowledge about procurement procedures

Overcoming barriers to local procurement allows small businesses to embrace opportunities of high-value contracts. Councils follow procedures to ensure the competitive process and to assess tenders. To help our readers understand the tender process, IBB Builder asked few questions to Watford Council Corporate Procurement.

What does the council buy?

The Council buys a very wide range of Works, Supplies and Services.

How often are there opportunities for construction companies?

A number of suitable opportunities are advertised every year.

Where the tender opportunities can be found?

Opportunities are advertised via the Council's e-procurement portal, the Government's Contracts Finder website and where appropriate in the OJEU.

Do you run any supplier events or networking?

Yes, most recently a Watford Business Expo event last November.

How does the council evaluate tenders?

Against the criteria and weightings published with the tender documents.

Can a SMEs contractor or new company compete for council opportunity?

Yes and they are actively encouraged to do so.

What rules and regulations should a contractor be aware of when tendering with the council?

Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's own Contract Procedure Rules.

What are the key tender documents?

The most important are the Specification and the Terms & Conditions although there will be others in the tender pack.

Here are TIPS how to increase chances to win public sector contracts:

- Actively identify opportunities- by proper research of government and local councils websites, newspapers and online platforms
- Build a history – keep all records and references, both of financial standing of company as well as previous contracts history
- Invest in website- present your business
- Ensure compliance- with regulations, insurances, certification, equal opportunities and health and safety policy
- Invest in tools- online estimator, BIM, membership on procurement related websites
- Take part in networking- attend Meet the Buyer events

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Procurex South Live 2016

20th April, Olympia London

It is an excellent event for all interested in the public procurement. Procurex provides both buyers and suppliers with knowledge and training about innovations or latest changes in legislations, plus gives networking and collaboration opportunities. The event offers visitors the chance to understand the process of procurement and presents various opportunities available.

Visitors can benefit from:

- Training opportunities at the Procurex Learning Academy with four learning zones
- Collaboration potential at Buyer Engagement Village where buyers and suppliers can network during one-to-one appointments
- Guidance on future opportunities
- Research on innovations, new products and services

During the Procurex visitors will be able to explore contracts at the Procurement Advice Hub or meet buyers within the Buyer Engagement Village. Procurement specialists will be offering help and knowledge to increase any business chances to win the public contract. There will be an opportunity to learn how to make your business compliant or how to pass PQQ stage of a tender process successfully. On the Supplier Learning Zone agenda there are subjects as for instance, 'Key Changes to the Procurement Procedures' or 'Tenderer's Common Mistakes'.

Attend Procurex South Live 2016 and give your company more chances of winning contracts in the public sector. Other Procurex events will be held this year in Scotland, Wales, Ireland and North England. (Source: www.procurexlive.co.uk)