

SELLING TO BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Buckinghamshire County Council's aim is to build effective relationships with suppliers, both large and small. This guidance provides current and potential suppliers with an insight into how the Council carries out its procurement activities

WHAT THE COUNCIL BUYS

In providing quality services to the people of Buckinghamshire, the Council buys goods and services in many diverse markets including Social Care, Highways Maintenance, Waste Management and ICT.

Buckinghamshire CC spends in the region of £180 million on goods and services each year, providing organisations from all sectors with a range of commercial opportunities. It is dedicated to being businesslike and innovative to ensure that services are constantly improving and to continue as a top-performing Council.

WHY DO BUSINESS WITH THE COUNCIL?

There are a number of reasons why you should be looking to supply to Buckinghamshire County Council:

- fairness
- equity
- openness
- access to a large customer base
- regular, reliable payments

PUBLIC SECTOR PROCUREMENT RULES

As a local authority, Buckinghamshire has to comply with many regulations and statutes.

These include:

- EU Procurement Directives
- national legislation
- Council's own Contract Standing Orders

COLLABORATIVE PROCUREMENT

The Council is committed to working in collaboration with other local authorities and the wider public sector in order to maximise the value



it obtains from its contracts. The Council is an active member of the following groups whose aim is to ensure local authorities work together more closely.

CENTRAL BUYING CONSORTIUM

Buckinghamshire County Council is a founder member of the Central Buying Consortium (CBC). The CBC is the largest local authority purchasing consortium in the UK. It has 17 local authority members, having grown from just six members when it was formed in 1991. It represents most of the major authorities from the Midlands to the South East, outside London. Benefits for suppliers of working with the CBC lie in the reduction of product diversity and in the reduced administration overheads which flow from dealing with a single contract.

BUCKS PROCUREMENT GROUP

The Council is a member of the Bucks Procurement Group, which includes the district councils within the county:

- Aylesbury Vale District Council
- Chiltern District Council
- Wycombe District Council
- South Buckinghamshire District Council

The Group is working towards further local authority collaboration within Buckinghamshire.

SOUTH EAST CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

The South East Centre of Excellence (SECE)'s aim is to develop opportunities for shared working between local authorities and other public sector bodies involving, where appropriate, the private and voluntary sectors.

TENDERING PROCESS

Advertise

The value of the contract will determine where the contract will be advertised. If the estimated value is below the relevant EU threshold then the tender will be advertised on the Council's website (www.buckscc.gov.uk), in *Contrax Weekly*, and possibly in local press or appropriate trade journals. If the estimated value is in excess of the EU threshold then a Call for Competition will be published in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) advertising the requirement. In addition to advertising in the Official Journal, the tender will also be advertised on the Council's website, *Contrax Weekly*, and possibly in the local press and trade journals, where appropriate.

Supplier selection

The selection of suppliers for invitation to tender is at the sole discretion of the Council.

The decision as to which suppliers are invited might be informed by:

- responses to a public notice (advert)
- invitation to a number of suppliers on an approved list

If there is no approved list, suppliers might be invited that the Council considers suitable.

To assess suitability, the Council uses a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) to capture information on prospective suppliers, including:

- company information
- technical capability
- race relations
- quality systems
- health and safety
- environmental policy

Completed PQQs will be assessed against predetermined criteria. Any suppliers failing to meet the minimum criteria will be notified in writing, and offered the opportunity of a debrief.

The PQQ document is normally sent via email. Completed PQQs are required to be returned in a hard copy format by the required deadline. It should be noted that the Council reserves the right to disregard any PQQs that are received after the deadline has expired.

ISSUING THE INVITATION TO TENDER DOCUMENTATION

It is Council policy that all tender documentation is posted in a hard-copy format to all those suitably qualified suppliers who have been shortlisted. Some or all of the documents may also be issued electronically, either via email or CD-ROM.

The tender documentation normally comprises the following:

- Invitation to Tender letter – containing an overview of the contract and some of the instructions for the tenderer
- instructions to the tenderer
- acknowledgement form
- specification

- pricing schedule
- form of tender
- insurance schedule
- management fee
- standard conditions of contract
- special conditions of contract – specific to each individual contract, and used where appropriate
- tender return label

RETURN AND OPENING OF TENDER

The Council has strict rules for the receipt and opening of tenders. There is a requirement for tenders to be received in hard-copy format. The deadline for submitting tenders is normally 12 noon on a specified Monday.

It is important that suppliers follow the instructions contained in the Invitation to Tender carefully so that they do not invalidate their proposal.

Specifically:

- the tender return label should be used
- there should be no distinguishing marks on the envelope
- tenders received after the deadline will be returned to the supplier unopened

Tenders are opened in the presence of key internal staff and a Cabinet Member, where required.

EVALUATION

The evaluation of proposals is carried out by an evaluation panel using the award criteria stated in the Invitation to Tender. Points are given to indicate how each tenderer performed against each of the criteria, balancing price and quality where appropriate.

Following an initial evaluation, it may be necessary to compile a shortlist and perhaps invite presentations from shortlisted tenderers.

AWARD OF CONTRACT

Contract award will either be based solely on lowest price or on the most economically advantageous offer, taking into consideration price and quality.

All tenderers will be notified in writing whether or not they have been successful. Unsuccessful tenderers will be offered a debrief. The Council will always endeavour to offer unsuccessful tenderers positive feedback to help them identify why their bid failed within the limits of commercial confidentiality.

For more information call **01296 382094** or email procurement@buckscc.gov.uk

Other useful websites:

- Central Buying Consortium – www.cbconline.org.uk
- Aylesbury Vale District Council – www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk
- Wycombe District Council – www.wycombe.gov.uk
- South Buckinghamshire District Council – www.southbucks.gov.uk
- South East Centre of Excellence – www.sece.gov.uk

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Expert public procurement consultancy for Buyers and Suppliers at your service



PASS – HELPING YOU MEET KEY OBJECTIVES

The key objective of public procurement professionals is to ensure that the most suitable supplier is selected to provide goods and services on terms which are likely to offer the best value for money. The PASS service helps you meet this requirement and deliver contracts that offer best value-for-money terms with suppliers who will execute them efficiently.

PASS CONSULTANCY

BiP's Procurement Advice and Support Service (PASS) provides organisations with access to experts in public procurement practices and procedures, thus helping you develop and deliver effective and efficient procurement. Our team offers a range of services to meet your specific needs. Whichever area you wish evaluated and improved, we have the experts to help.

The PASS consultancy's mission is to help you deliver the best in government procurement through:

- Practical solutions to improve procurement performance
- Innovative approaches to knowledge transfer within government
- Joined-up government
- Improved performance indicators
- Strategic direction and performance
- Opportunities offered by e-government
- Capacity to deliver change to meet identified needs
- Continuous improvement of services and challenging poor performance
- Sustainable development within decision-making processes and delivery of services
- EU-compliant processes
- Best practice procurement training

PASS TRAINING

Our consultants can provide you with bespoke training packages to suit your needs. Consultancy and training is available for the following: environmental purchasing, partnering, evaluation, e-government, supplier debriefing, UK legal processes and precedents, contract management, EU-compliant tendering and much more.

PASS ONLINE GUIDANCE

The PASS service provides online guidances on all aspects of the public procurement process and legal requirements: www.bipsolutions.com/html/briefing.php

PASS – EFFECTIVE DISPUTE MANAGEMENT

Contractual and procurement-related disputes are time-consuming, expensive and unpleasant. They can destroy client/contractor relationships, can add substantially to the cost of the contract, and can nullify some or all of its benefits or advantages. They can also have an impact on value for money. It is therefore in everyone's interest to work at avoiding disputes in the first place. Inevitably, however, disputes do occur and when they do the importance of a fast, efficient and cost-effective Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) procedure cannot be overstated. If a dispute arises, it is important to manage it actively and positively and at the right level in order to encourage early and effective settlement. Unnecessary delays and inefficiency can lead to rapid deterioration in relations and entrenchment of opinions. ADR through PADRE mediation involves the use of a trusted expert third party and is an effective alternative to litigation. PADRE mediation is provided by experts in contracting and public procurement. If you would like more details on how PADRE can help your organisation and become your mediation service of choice, telephone the PASS team on 0845 270 7055 or email pass@bipsolutions.com.

PASS HEALTH CHECK

The PASS service can help your organisation examine its current procurement organisational structures, strategies, processes, practices and related strengths and weaknesses. It delivers a detailed PASS Mark Health Check Outcome Highlight Report (OHR) that outlines areas of strength as well as those requiring further attention, and provides an outline Project Initiation Document (PID) designed to deliver a more effective and efficient tendering process that will help you achieve optimum performance and better value-for-money procurement.

PASS IN-HOUSE PRESENTATIONS

PASS consultancy can provide you with in-house presentations directed to buyer or supplier. Each presentation will be bespoke to your requirements, whether they be with regards to improving your tendering practices or your procurement strategy or processes. Contact: pass@bipsolutions.com



The PASS Mark Health Check is a process-based evaluation technique that helps identify how your company can develop more effective processes when tendering for public sector contracts.

For further information on the PASS service, contact our PASS Team on 0845 270 7055, email pass@bipsolutions.com or visit www.bipsolutions.com/pass/