

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT – SUPPLIER SINGLE POINT OF ENQUIRY



The Single Point of Enquiry (SPoE) service has been introduced by the Scottish Government's Procurement Directorate to provide suppliers to public sector/public funded bodies with an impartial point of contact where they can ask for advice or raise concerns about public procurement practices in Scotland. The SPoE is part of the Public Procurement Reform Programme initiated in response to a review of public procurement in Scotland by John F McClelland CBE. The Reform Programme's vision is the implementation of structures, capability and processes to provide continuous improvement in procurement across the Scottish public sector in order to deliver value for money improvements and support increased efficiency.

THE SINGLE POINT OF ENQUIRY

- **AIMS** – To provide businesses with advice on procurement legislation and practices, to seek resolution of disputes regarding procurement practice and to help improve the consistency of public procurement processes applied by public and publicly funded bodies in Scotland.
- **VISION** – To encourage and establish best practice in procurement within the Scottish public sector and publicly funded bodies by working with suppliers, the business community and purchasers to address issues of concern.
- **VALUES** – To operate with impartiality, fairness and objectivity and promote a culture of openness and transparency in relation to procurement practice.

Suppliers' issues should, in the first instance, be discussed with the contracting authority concerned or the Centre of Expertise for the relevant sectors (central government, NHS, universities and colleges, and local authorities) to seek resolution or clarification at that level. If this route fails to produce satisfactory results the supplier can then contact the SPoE. Alternatively, suppliers may approach the SPoE, on a confidential basis, at any stage.

Contact details for the Centres of Expertise can be found at:
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/10/22132922/1

The SPoE is not a point of appeal on procurement decisions nor will it seek to influence or change sourcing decisions made by a contracting authority. It complements the existing formal avenues of redress available, such as court proceedings or submitting a complaint to the European Commission.

The SPoE will seek to work with the procuring authority and the Centre of Expertise concerned to bring about a positive outcome to supplier issues.

The SPoE will report on trends and significant issues to the Public Procurement Advisory Group and the Procurement Reform Delivery Group as required. These groups are chaired by Mr J Mather MSP and Mr J Swinney MSP respectively, and their membership includes senior representatives from the wider public sector, Centres of Expertise and leading Scottish business organisations.

The service was launched in 2008 and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth John Swinney commented: "I am determined that procurement reform will deliver results, and this is a positive and welcome step. It will give suppliers, and their business organisations, a new channel to seek advice or register their concerns regarding public procurement practices. This will undoubtedly lead to improvements and better standards in procurement across the public sector."

The new service offers an informal 'honest broker' channel to improve the interface between suppliers and buyers.

Welcoming the new service, CBI Scotland Director Iain McMillan said: "This 'one stop shop' is a welcome move to strengthen public procurement and the voice of business within it, raising standards across the public sector and ensuring that best practices become common practice throughout. This ought to benefit public procurers, private sector suppliers, and taxpayers alike.

"The size and scope of Scotland's public sector highlights how public procurement is not just an issue about value for money and efficiency in public services, but goes right to the heart of the debate about growing our economy."

Andrew Watson, spokesman for the Federation of Small Businesses in Scotland, said: "The Single Point of Enquiry is another milestone in public procurement reform which should help improve public procurement. It cannot overturn the decisions of public agencies, but it will give businesses the opportunity to report examples of poor procurement practice and raise concerns about the way some buying organisations are performing. It will also enable the Scottish Procurement Directorate to identify any patterns or problems which can then be addressed with targeted action.

"This latest improvement will help to cement Scotland's position as the most advanced part of the UK in terms of public procurement and, we hope, lead to noticeable benefits for both the public and private sectors."

The service can be contacted at: spoeprocurement@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or telephone Iain Murphy on: 0141 242 5582



Expert public procurement consultancy for Buyers and Suppliers at your service



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 to 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 to 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 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 – 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 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 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/