



FACT SHEET

PUBLIC SECTOR TENDERING

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Bidding for Public Sector Tenders – A guide through the process

Public sector tendering is a wonderful mix of form filling and meeting deadlines. It is often a time consuming and frustrating procedure loved and un-loved in equal measures. I have the pleasure of working with a number of companies, both SMEs and larger organisations alike, where I help them through this minefield.

So what is public sector tendering and how can you become engaged and enthused? Public sector tendering is the process whereby businesses can sell their goods and services to public sector organisations by bidding for contracts. Over £230 billion is procured annually in the UK alone and this manifests itself in hundreds of contracts which are issued daily.

Public sector organisations include:- local authorities and councils, the NHS, academia, housing associations, the emergency services, the Ministry of Defence, government departments and charities. This list is by no means exhaustive.

Contract Notices are published daily on a myriad of web portals which allow prospective suppliers to register and start the process of bidding for a contract. Once registration has been completed, which is a simple task, the first document is made available. This is the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ). This document, which can vary in length, asks a number of questions - all of which come under the basic heading of “tell me about you and your business”. Suppliers have typically three to four weeks to complete the PQQ which must then be submitted by a pre-determined deadline date and time.

Contracting authorities then have the task of going through each PQQ (of which there could be dozens), in order to assess the suppliers’ business and shortlist those who score the highest points. For the suppliers who are unsuccessful at the pre-qualifying stage, feedback is available. Those suppliers who are successful at pre-qualifying stage are rewarded with another document to complete – the Invitation To Tender (ITT).

The ITT continues the process by asking questions around how a supplier will set up and run the particular contract if awarded and what their costs are for supplying the service and/or goods. Once again, there is a three to four week period to allow suppliers to complete the ITT and submit by a deadline date and time.

Some contracting authorities then request the short-listed suppliers to attend and deliver a presentation and answer questions about their company in relation to the bid. If this is relevant to your bid, be careful to approach the presentation as a key part of the tendering process. The statement “people buy from people” is as relevant in public sector tendering as it is with private/commercial tendering and suppliers have been known to win or lose a bid at presentation stage.

After all the processes and procedures above have been completed, the contract is awarded. Unsuccessful short-listed suppliers will have the opportunity to receive feedback. The successful company (or companies) can then rejoice in having won a

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contract which could be for a period of years and of having devised a strategy to bid for and win public sector contracts.

Public sector tendering is not an easy process and businesses need to make sure that if they are embarking on this journey, it is embedded into the sales strategy of the company and not a form filling procedure conducted at the last minute.

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