

Selling to the Council

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Introduction

The Council is a major purchaser of goods and services and spends over £180 million a year on obtaining a vast range of supplies, works and services from the external market.

Naturally many organisations will want to sell or provide their services and supplies to the Council, so we have put together this Selling to the Council Guide to assist suppliers and potential providers who wish to do so, by:

- Outlining the rules that the Council must follow
- Explaining where to find details of opportunities to supply the Council
- Explaining how to tender for the Council's business
- Explaining what is expected of you when undertaking work for us

The main purpose of this document is intended to provide existing and potential suppliers with guidance about the practicalities of the Council's procurement or buying processes, from smaller purchases to major contracts.

For organisations interested in gaining a wider perspective about how the Council formulates its overall purchasing plans, there is also a summary describing the Council's overall Procurement & Commissioning Strategy.

About South Gloucestershire Council

South Gloucestershire is located in the South West of England and covers 53,665 hectares. It is a mixed urban and rural authority with rich natural and cultural heritage. It is an area of great diversity and contrast with a variety of communities, characterised by the special relationship between town and country. Residents are fortunate to have a high quality local environment which they greatly value. Attractive and historic landscapes link unspoilt market towns, villages and established rural and urban communities with major new residential areas, industrial and commercial developments.

South Gloucestershire council operates out of four main sites based in Yate, Kingswood, and Patchway. Furthermore there are three "directorates", or departments, each with their own specific responsibilities:

Children, Adults & Health (CAH)

- This department brings all the 'people' areas of our work together and incorporates the new public health responsibilities that transferred to the local authority in April 2013.

Chief Executive & Corporate Resources (CECR)

- This department concentrates mainly on the internal needs of the Council. That means things like the IT system, HR, legal matters, property and budgets

Environment & Community Services (ECS)

- This department works towards reducing disadvantage, providing a cleaner, safer and greener environment, and creating healthier communities through services such as Community Libraries, Streetcare and Waste Collection and Recycling.

How is procurement organised?

This Council has adopted a procurement hub model with a specialist team based in each of the 3 directorates. The Corporate Hub (CECR) is responsible for developing the Council's procurement and commissioning strategy, policy, good practice and procedures to drive best value for money. It is also responsible for Corporate Purchasing Arrangements.

Contracts let by the Council can take a number of forms, including:

- Corporate Purchasing Arrangements: A contract where terms and conditions are agreed with the supplier for certain services, supplies or works which affect the whole Council, e.g. office supplies, office furniture, etc.
- One-off Contracts or Commissioned Services: These contracts meet specific needs/individual requirements.
- Concessions: An arrangement whereby the Council grants the contractor the right to operate a contract, within stipulated parameters and to benefit from the profit made from the operation.
- Framework Agreements: used to procure batches of similar works, supplies or services which the Council expects to need over a period of time, but where it has no certainty as to what sort of quantity or details it may require. The Council can set up its own framework agreements or opt to use those arranged by other central buying consortiums such as the Crown Commercial Service (CCS), Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) and Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO).

Commissioning & Procurement Strategy 2014 - 2018

The Council purchases a wide variety of goods and services from a diverse range of suppliers. Examples of the Council's buying activity range from goods and materials associated with carrying out public works such as street lighting and roadworks through to IT systems and a range of general and personal services for South Gloucestershire residents from ranging from schools, youth and leisure facilities through to personal care for elderly and disabled people in their homes, in the community or in residential and nursing accommodation where people can no longer look after themselves. As a large organisation the Council is also a major consumer of office products and equipment, water, gas and electricity.

The word commissioning means different things to different people. It is therefore important to state clearly that in South Gloucestershire the definition of commissioning is the process to meet local need which involves both specifying and securing good quality provision. Priorities are those which are needed to deliver quality local services and improve the outcomes for service users. Therefore any service provision secured must be cost effective and provide value for money. Commissioning includes monitoring and evaluating services provided in order to ascertain their impact on improvement, and applies to all services within South Gloucestershire whether provided by the Local Authority, Health Service, Police, Schools or the private or voluntary sectors.

In order to achieve value for money the Council's Procurement & Commissioning Strategy 2014-18 sets out key objectives for the next 4 years and is based around 5 key aims:

- Developing our approach to commissioning and localism
- Efficient and effective procurement
- Improvement
- Supplier and Contract Management
- Governance and Sustainability

Effective commissioning forms a continuous cycle of action and improvement, from identification of needs through to review of delivery and achievement of outcomes and includes commissioning, procurement and contract management activity.

For more information on commissioning, please refer to the [Council's Procurement and Commissioning Strategy](#).

The greatest proportion of spend by the Council is as a result of social care commissioning by Children Adults & Health Department. As people have more control over their care via self-directed support - choosing how their care budget is spent - we want providers to offer citizens choice, quality and efficiency so that South Gloucestershire residents are able to access every opportunity to live independently and maintain their wellbeing. This is reflected in the department's

Market Position Statement which is aimed at current and potential providers of care and support services so that they can understand the present and future demands and how services can respond to personalisation.

The full document can be accessed [here](#).

Working with the Voluntary Sector and Stimulating Business Activity in South Gloucestershire

The Council is committed to working with communities, the voluntary sector, local organisations, small businesses (SMEs) and micro enterprises as part of its approach to commissioning and procurement. Whilst major procurements are subject to competitive tendering, the Council engages with and supports community groups, voluntary and local organisations through a range of funding streams and processes. This is where smaller organisations can apply or bid to provide services which meet the needs of specific areas, communities or service user groups. These are not under commercial contracts but arranged through grants and commissioning agreements, where the Council works in partnership with the communities and organisations involved.

In the sense of larger opportunities, where appropriate the Council will fully consider whether any contract may be suitable for economic operators that are small or medium enterprises (SMEs). However, any selection of tenderers will be based solely on the criteria set out for the procurement, and the contract will be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender. The Council is also an active member of the West of England Partnership.

Through the South Gloucestershire Compact with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) the Council is committed to giving voluntary and community organisations the fullest opportunity to compete for the provision of services. Where appropriate, a full assessment is always made of the Voluntary and Community Sector's capacity and suitability to provide services to meet an identified need. The South Gloucestershire Compact is an agreement between the public sector and voluntary, community and social enterprise organizations in South Gloucestershire. It sets out a way of working to strengthen the relationship between the sectors, for the benefit of residents and communities.

A copy of the full South Gloucestershire Compact can be found [here](#)

Social Value

Social Value has been defined as "the additional benefit to the community from a commissioning/procurement process over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes".

Social Value shifts focus from the cost of a service to the overall value of the outcomes that can be delivered.

Therefore the Council will take the opportunity to integrate social value into contracts where this can be realistically achieved by sounding out the stakeholders and suppliers at the planning stage.

To this end the Council has recently adopted a set of guiding principles relating to Social Value which is published on the Council's website [Social Value Policy](#)

Rules & Regulations

What Rules & Regulations must be followed?

As a local authority there are regulations which the Council has to follow when procuring supplies, works and services. It is important that if you wish to contract with the Council you are fully aware of the rules and regulations which govern the way we operate.

The following table summarises the rules that must be followed, depending on the value of the purchase or contract:

Value	Process	Advertising
Up to £75,000 (3 written quotes)	You will be asked for a single written quotation	No requirement to advertise
£75,001 to EU Threshold	These opportunities will be offered via the Supplying the South West portal. www.supplyingthesouthwest.org.uk	Opportunities over £75k (full contract value) should be advertised via the Supplying the South West portal and on the governments contract finder. The one exception is property services please see section X.X.
Above £172,514 (this figure is what is known as the 'EU threshold') for goods and services	EU Procurement Directives apply (See the following section: 'What are EU Procurement Directives?')	Adverts will be placed in Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU), and any other appropriate media including contracts finder, e.g. relevant trade journals, and the Council's e-procurement systems (Supplying the South West portal).
Above £4.32m (this figure is what is known as the 'EU threshold') for works	EU Procurement Directives apply (See the following section: 'What are EU Procurement Directives?')	Adverts will be placed in Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU), and any other appropriate media, e.g. relevant trade journals, and the Council's e-procurement systems (Supplying the South West portal).
Light touch regime – For social and health care contracts the threshold is €750,000 for advertising in the OJEU	Below this threshold the Councils contracting rules are followed.	Above €750,000 advertisement and award in OJEU and e-portal. Commissioned services above £75,000 should be advertised on the e-procurement portal.

What are EU Procurement Directives?

The EU Procurement Directives are the over-arching framework which dictate the way in which public bodies carry out their procurement activities for contracts over the relevant thresholds for local authorities (see table below). We have a legal requirement to comply with these Directives.

The thresholds for 2014/2016 are:

Service	Supplies	Works
£172,514	£172,514	£4,322,012
€207,000	€207,000	€5,186,000

Note: the thresholds are reviewed every two years.

Under the EU Procurement Directives, South Gloucestershire Council can conduct their procurement using one of five processes, all of which should be conducted using the Portal:

- **Open** – any organisation can express an interest and request tender documents. There is only one stage to this process: applicants provide financial and organisation details as well as a response to the tender documentation.
- **Restricted** – a two-stage process. Organisations expressing an interest undergo an initial pre-qualification assessment. Following evaluation of this stage (the selection stage), only the most suitable applicants are invited to tender (award stage).
- **Competitive procedure with Negotiation** – The Authority must indicate minimum requirements and award criteria. The Council must then negotiate with all suppliers who submit an initial bid.
- **Competitive dialogue** – used only for very complex procurement exercises where discussions with potential suppliers is critical to the tendering process.
- **Innovation Partnerships** – Encourages suppliers to develop works, supplies and services not currently available through long term partnerships.

The open and restricted processes have mandatory minimum time limits that applicants are given in which to return their tender submissions.

The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 are followed by all Contracting Authorities, which includes local government.

Where the procurement/commissioned service exceed the EU thresholds (see above), we must follow these basic requirements:

- Decide which of the processes is the most appropriate;
- Publish a Tender Notice in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) to give all EU suppliers an equal opportunity to tender (above €750,000 for light touch regime commissioned services);
- Consideration will be given to breaking larger procurements into lots;
- Minimum timescales are laid out for above threshold procurements, however, these should be extended for complex procurements/commissioned services
- The opportunity should be advertised on the Pro-contract e-tendering portal
- Invite tenders according to the process being used taking account of the minimum timescales imposed, to ensure that reasonable time is given to respond to adverts and prepare submissions;
- Select a suitable contractor using the criteria published in the tender notice or tender documents;
- Place a Contract Award Notice in OJEU;
- Follow a mandatory ten day standstill process for OJEU contracts (this is also referred to as the 'Alcatel period'). This is a period of time between notifying the successful applicant that we want to award the contract to them and notifying the unsuccessful applicants; and the actual award of contract.

We will not use Pre-Qualification Questionnaires for procurements of goods, services and works below £172,514 in line with the current contract regulations.

The Council also makes use of other contracting authority's frameworks. This is where the contracting authority has undertaken a fully EU compliant procurement and the contract (framework) is open to other public sector bodies to use. This is particularly likely where commodity products are being sourced.

The Procurement Process

How do I find out about opportunities?

Details of forthcoming contracts are advertised through our procurement system – <https://www.supplyingthesouthwest.org.uk/>. This allows suppliers to register to access past, current and future contract information, and submit bids electronically. They can also keep their profile updated, including the goods and services they offer, and supporting documentation such as brochures and price lists. We recommend that all organisations registered on the portal regularly update their details, particularly if key people leave the organisation.

All processes to let contracts over £75,000 should be undertaken through this system (except property services where EXOR is utilised). Accordingly, all relevant tender documentation is available to download from here or instructions on how to obtain further information will be clearly outlined. Potential suppliers should register on our supplying the south west portal. If you are registered on our e-procurement system you should receive automatic alerts when relevant opportunities are available. Appendix 1 is a guide to registering and basic use of the supplying the South West procurement portal.

Contracts over EU thresholds are also advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). Potential providers should review the official EU website regularly to obtain details of potential forthcoming opportunities. <http://ted.europa.eu/TED/main/HomePage.do>

How do I apply for contracts?

The contract notice (in the OJEU) and advertisement (on the Portal) will advise suppliers and potential providers of the process to be followed for that particular contract. Potential providers will need to register on our procurement system (see supplying the South West link above) in order to apply for that opportunity. For all opportunities over £75,001 (and for some under this threshold) the tender process should only take place on the Portal. No direct communication i.e. paper, email, phone, will be accepted. Therefore, if you wish to supply the Council you must be registered on the Portal.

Construction Contracts

From 1st August 2013 the Council began using EXOR to pre-qualify companies for some construction contracts. Procurements will still be carried out on the Portal but may be limited to selected EXOR accredited suppliers.

What information do I need to provide?

For above EU threshold contracts, the council is likely to use either the **Open** (one stage) or the **Restricted** process (two-stage). The published tender guidelines for each opportunity will detail what information is required for that bid.

Below are some examples of the information we will require:

- **Financial Information** - organisations will be asked for certain financial information as we need to be sure that you can meet the requirement for the life of the contract. The level of financial information will vary depending on the scope and size of the contract.
- **Experience and Technical Ability** - We will ask for information to assess whether an organisation has the relevant experience and technical ability to carry out the categories of work and to provide the type and quality of service required. In most cases it is necessary to provide details of similar contracts held over recent years and to provide contact details of referees.
- **Organisation** - We will ask about your organisational structure to establish whether you have the appropriate resources to fulfil the contract.

- **Insurances** - You are also asked to provide assurances regarding insurance cover as South Gloucestershire Council has a responsibility to ensure that organisations with which it contracts carry any statutory insurance. The levels of insurance will be proportionate to the risk inherent in the contract.
- **Equalities and Equal Opportunities** - South Gloucestershire Council is committed to eliminating inequalities in all functions, including procurement. The Council strives to ensure that their services are equally accessible and appropriate to the differing needs of all community sectors, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, disability, age or sexuality. This section (where relevant) will ask how the organisation includes equality provisions in its employment and service provision.
- **Sustainability** - South Gloucestershire Council is committed to protecting the local environment and taking responsibility for minimising the wider sustainability effects of its procurement decisions. The Council expects its contractors and suppliers to meet a similar level of commitment and will seek information to determine the commitment from potential suppliers.
- **Health and Safety** - South Gloucestershire Council is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for its employees, service users and those affected by its operations. Suppliers can play a key role in achieving this and, prior to carrying out work for the Council, information will be sought concerning applicants' safety policies and operational safety procedures. You will be expected to know how to manage health and safety in your area of work and to accept responsibility for it.
- **Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery** - The Council is required under The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to ensure that contractors providing critical services are able to maintain service delivery in the event of an emergency. Critical services are services that the Council provides which play a significant role in supporting the safety and welfare of the community. Suppliers will need to demonstrate robust supply chain security when supplying equipment, plant and materials. We therefore ask contractors whether they have identified the key risks to their business and whether measures have been put in place to mitigate disruption to service continuity in the event of an emergency.
- **References** – we will usually ask for details of at least two referees (but the number requested will be contract specific) who should be able to provide a reference on any similar work done by the applicant for, or delivered on behalf of, the referee.

What is a Pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ)?

Where the Council is carrying out a restricted tender (this process is only used for procurements over the EU goods and services threshold), then you may be asked to complete a PQQ. In a PQQ you will be asked to provide basic details about your organisation to verify that it can be identified as a legitimate trading organisation, that it has acceptable levels of economic and financial standing, and that it promotes good practice in areas of equal opportunities, protecting the environment and health and safety. You will also be asked to demonstrate that you have the experience and technical capability to deliver the contract. Central government have mandated the PQQ that must be used by Local Authorities.

What if I am invited to tender?

Suppliers who wish to bid for an opportunity (or those who have been shortlisted after evaluation of the PPQ in the restricted process) will be invited to download a set of tender documents, which will consist of all or some of the following:

- **Invitation to tender** – this advises when and where tenders should be submitted.
- **Instructions to tenderers** – provides guidance for completing tender documentation.

- **Specification** – sets out what needs to be achieved and includes policies, procedures and guidelines that need to be followed. Applicants are expected to tender on the basis of this specification, which will include performance targets or criteria to be met in delivering the services, supplies or works.
- **Pricing Schedule** – the document where you enter all your prices.
- **Terms & Conditions** – defines how South Gloucestershire Council will let the contract, the rules tenderers must comply with and the relationship between the Council and the selected contractor.
- **Tender evaluation criteria** – advises how the tender submission will be evaluated and the contract awarded.
- **Any additional supporting information** – such as South Gloucestershire Council policies that applicants are expected to follow.

Tenders must be returned by the date given. The system will not allow you to submit tenders after the deadline. This is because all tender documents must be opened at the same time in order to ensure a fair process.

As the system is web-based, we advise all applicants not to leave uploading their submission until just before the deadline, but to upload several hours in advance. The reason is that there might be a large number of applicants trying to upload their submissions, not only for the tender that you are involved in, but there might also be other tenders with the same closing date and time – this is unavoidable.

Once the deadline for receipt of tender documents (PQQ or ITT) has passed, all documents will be evaluated. This evaluation will be done against the evaluation criteria which will have been provided by the Council with the original documentation.

What are the Council's expectations of suppliers?

The Council needs to ensure that we offer value for money to South Gloucestershire taxpayers. By value for money we mean achieving the optimum balance between quality and cost. We therefore expect excellent performance from suppliers, demonstrated through:

- **Appropriate total cost** - Suppliers should consider the total, whole life costs of supply when putting together their tenders.
- **Quality** - suppliers are expected to provide services, supplies and works to an appropriate standard of quality, to meet the needs set out in the specification. In this respect the Council will expect suppliers to *commit to partnership working and continuous service and quality Improvement*
- **Adherence to Council policies and protocols** - we are committed to delivering our services with consideration for a number of issues including sustainability, equalities, data protection and confidentiality, health and safety, and look for suppliers who are committed to helping us achieve our aims in these respects.
- **Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults** - All suppliers of personal care and support services that the Council purchases for its service users must have the necessary safeguarding policies, procedures and training in place and be registered where appropriate with the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- **Integrity** - honesty is expected in all dealings between the Council and its suppliers in addition to other relevant parties. In particular it is a criminal offence to give or offer any gift, inducement or reward to a local government official. It is South Gloucestershire Councils policy not to accept inducements, gifts or hospitality. Applicants should note that they risk being excluded from the procurement process for failing to observe this requirement.

Suppliers will also be expected to ensure that service users are appropriately protected with regard to their property and finances.

- **Innovation** - suppliers are encouraged to be innovative and suggest new ideas to add value, continuously striving to improve their performance and helping the Council to *develop services and increase capacity to meet the changing needs of the Council's area and its service users*.
- **Relationship between the Council and suppliers** - the Council is committed to developing and maintaining good supplier relationships and suppliers are expected to maintain good communications with the Council throughout the contract.

How is the contract awarded?

Tender evaluation is carried out in a comprehensive, equitable, auditable and transparent manner. To ensure fairness the evaluation criteria and method will be available with the tender documents when they are issued.

The Council must be sure that in selecting a supplier it is getting value for money and the services will be delivered effectively. Evaluation is therefore based on two key criteria – how the tender proposes to deliver the contract (quality) and the cost of the contract (price). The Council are looking for the best balance of quality and price, not just the lowest price. In most cases additional criteria will also be used in evaluating tenderers. Applicants will be advised what quality/price percentage breakdown will be used in the evaluation as this varies from contract to contract.

Contracts are awarded to the provider who is considered to offer value for money, having regard to price, quality and best value over the 'whole life' of the contract – often referred to as “most economically advantageous tender” (MEAT), and to be best able to meet the Council's specification.

Evaluation of the most economically advantageous tender can incorporate a number of factors including:

- Financial viability of the tender
- Whether the required quality standards can be met
- Technical merit
- After sales service
- Delivery date
- Technical back-up
- Experience
- Competence
- Policy issues such as Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, equalities & sustainability

The criteria to be used will be listed in the tender documents, in order of importance. The weightings of the criteria will also be given.

How else might I be evaluated?

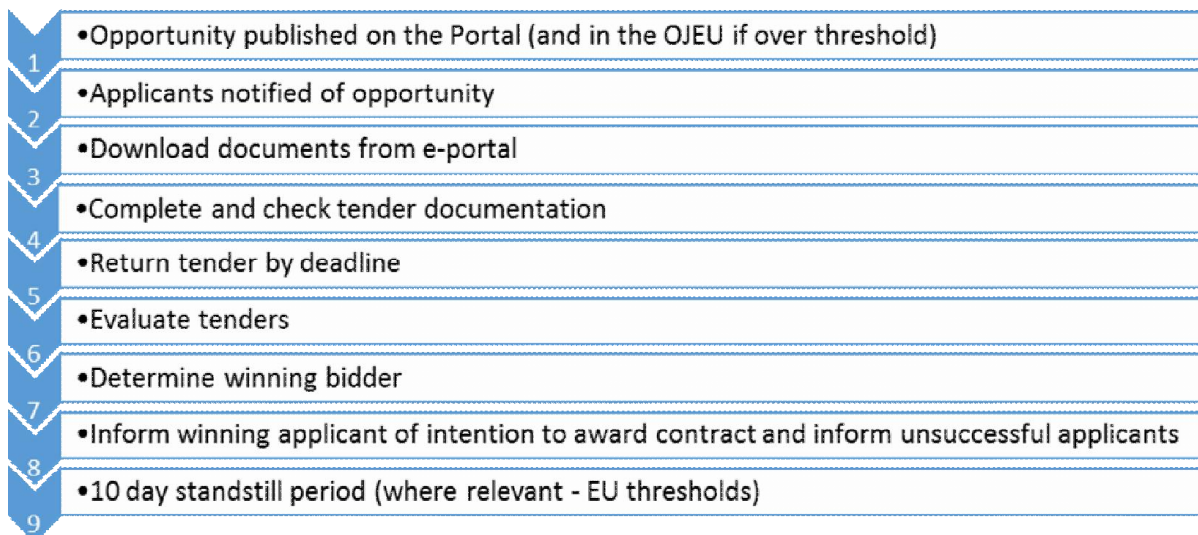
The tender documents may include Method Statements and/or Case Studies, which are used to determine how contractors would manage the service or deal with particular issues. In responding to method statements and case studies applicants are expected to illustrate what methods and procedures they propose to use in undertaking the work, showing initiative and innovation in delivering the service.

At any time during the tender process you might be invited to give a presentation or attend an interview as part of your submission. The Council may also conduct site visits to see first-hand how applicants organise their work.

In some instances, it might look like similar questions are being asked at both PQQ and tender stage (e.g. technical merit, experience, etc). Be aware that questions at PQQ stage relate to the organisation as it stands at the time of completing the PQQ; those asked at tender stage relate to how the organisation will be able to deliver the contract should they be successful.

The mandatory ten-day standstill period must be observed for EU contracts before a contract is signed.

The typical Open procurement process:



Post Contract Award

Once a tender has closed and all bids have been evaluated, a winning supplier will be selected based on the award criteria given in the tender documentation. All suppliers who have been unsuccessful will be notified in writing, along with the reasons why they have been unsuccessful and the comparative benefits of the winning bid.

Can I ask for feedback?

Under the EU directives you are legally entitled to written feedback from us and if your tender is unsuccessful you will be given feedback automatically within the letter sent by the procurement team. However, if you would like further explanation as to why you were unsuccessful you can ask for more detailed feedback from the contracting department. This may include face to face meetings or teleconferences.

Within the limits of confidentiality, we can provide applicants with feedback on which aspects of their submission were strongest and which were weakest, along with advice on improving and developing for the future.

Being unsuccessful in one tender application does not mean you will be unsuccessful in future. You should use the feedback to help you improve for upcoming opportunities.

How are contracts monitored?

If you have successfully bid for a contract, you will be expected to provide the service in accordance with the requirements set out in the contract documentation and your proposals to carry out the contract.

In order to ensure that we are continually providing value for money services to our community, suppliers working for the Council are regularly monitored to assess their compliance with pre-defined performance criteria. The contract conditions are strictly applied, and explanations sought if a contractor fails to perform to the levels required.

The Council has a legal duty to monitor specific equality criteria where the service being provided is defined as "Core".

Where can I find further information?

- If you are looking for information regarding a specific contract please use the contact details provided in the advert/contract notice and tendering details either published in the EU Journal (OJEU) or via the South West contracts portal at: <https://www.supplyingthesouthwest.org.uk/>
- General information on the tendering process and procurement at South Gloucestershire can be found on the Council's website or obtained by e-mailing the following address: procurement@southglos.gov.uk.
- Should you have any comments or feedback on this guide we would be happy to hear from you as we are always looking to develop the advice, guidance and support we offer to potential suppliers. Please contact us by e-mailing procurement@southglos.gov.uk.

Appendix 1 - SUPPLIERS INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTAL

Introduction to supplying the council

The Council's e-tendering system is a web-based portal titled **Supplying the South West** ("the portal"). It has been developed so we can publish our contracts and tendering opportunities alongside 27 other councils in the South West.

This portal enables each local authority within the South West to advertise all contract opportunities and all awarded contracts on one central portal giving suppliers the ability to view information from all the councils, and if applicable express their interest in forthcoming opportunities in one central place.

Why do we use this system?

The Councils own contracting rules require a full competitive process for all opportunities over £75k (whole life cost). The portal also enables the Council to comply with EU guidance for contract opportunities over the relevant threshold. However, for best practise, as many opportunities as possible will be published on the portal no matter the value.

For the council the portal provides:

- a channel for advertising tenders at no cost and for publishing tender documents
- a facility for conducting the complete tendering process electronically (e-tendering)
- a facility for recording information about the contracts we manage, as required by Council policy

The system also facilitates collaboration between councils on procurement. It is possible for officers of different authorities to collaborate on joint e-tender processes.

It also makes the council more open, and should result in better value contracts being let as more suppliers will be aware of current contracts and their end dates, hopefully resulting in increased competition.

Benefits to you as a supplier

It is totally free to register your details on the system, and once done will allow you to take part in any tenders, questionnaires or quotations with the organisation(s), receive email alerts when opportunities arise in categories of interest, and to express interest in opportunities electronically. This will result in less time being needed to check the portal for opportunities that are relevant and should ensure that no future opportunities are missed.

The system handles all aspects of the tender process including PQQ's (pre-qualification questionnaires'), ITT's (Invitation to Tenders) and RFQ (request for quotation). This includes expressing interest in a contract opportunity, the electronic -sending and receiving of documentation, questions and answers throughout the tender process, post tender clarification and various notifications through the process.

You only need to register once to do business with all the councils. At the point of registration, you can choose to receive updates from all organisations or may select which organisations they wish to receive opportunity alerts from. You are also given the ability to select the product or service categories that you wish to receive updates from, ensuring that you only receive information that is relevant to your areas of skills and services.

Once registered you will then be informed automatically of relevant contract opportunities as they are published, based on the organisations and categories that you selected. This is done via an automatic email that is sent to your registered email address, removing the need to check the portal daily.

The Contract Store area of the portal allows suppliers to freely and easily see what contracts have been let by the councils and details on these contracts. It will direct you to the correct people to get in touch with if you have any questions. You can come to the site and search the contract store, even if you are not registered on the portal.

The Opportunities Store is an area where you can come and see any upcoming tenders that you can potentially get involved with. You can search opportunities without being registered, but if you are registered you will receive automatic notification as described above.

How do I register?

One registration gives access to all councils using the portal and will enable you to access a huge number of contracts and tender opportunities.

Please go to this [website](#) to register.

Requirements & tips for using the portal

- Is it critical that you keep the contact details up to date on your account otherwise you may not receive notification of relevant opportunities e.g. if the named contact has left your business. Therefore we would suggest using a generic email address that can be accessed by multiple employees, and/or naming several secondary contacts under your account. Delete old account/users.
- All contact and questions must be directed through the portal
- Bids must be received by the deadline. No late bids will be accepted
- All bids must be submitted electronically through the portal. We cannot accept paper or emailed bids

Questions

If you are experiencing issues using the portal which cannot be resolved by reading the user guides, Due North Technical Support Team can be contacted on:

- By Tel: 0844 334 5204 (lines open from 08:30am to 17:00pm Monday to Friday, excluding English public holidays)
- By Email: swsupport@due-north.com

If the question relates to a specific tender or existing contract then this needs to be answered by the contract owner, details of which can be found within the published opportunity.