

I Want to Bid, What Do I Do?

If you are a new supplier, or have never bid for a public sector contract before, it can be daunting. You are probably wondering - where do I start?

The [Public Contracts Scotland \(PCS\) website](#), provided by the Scottish Government, is where all public sector buying organisations must advertise regulated procurements. Regulated procurements are all contracts valued at £50,000 or above excluding VAT for goods and services but excluding utilities and concession contracts.

Quickfire Guide

Quickfire Guide

Public Contracts Scotland (PCS)

Who can use PCS?

Anyone can use PCS to browse for current contract opportunities and award notices. You do not need to register on PCS to do this.

As a supplier you can:

- register on PCS to receive e-mail alerts when new contract opportunities are advertised
- set up a Supplier Finder Profile which allows buyers to invite you to a Quick Quote
- register your interest in and bid for an opportunity

Buyers use PCS to:

- advertise future opportunities by using a Prior Information Notice
- invite specific suppliers to submit quotations for low value goods and services which are also low risk through the online 'Quick Quote' system
- automatically post UK wide contract notices via the [Find a Tender Service \(FTS\)](#) for those contracts over [threshold](#)
- post below-threshold contract notices
- publish [Contract Award Notices](#)
- publish their [Contract Registers](#) which detail all of their organisations current contracts from regulated procurements (£50,000 or over for goods and services)
- reserve suitable contracts for supported businesses.

Main Contractors on public sector contracts can use PCS to advertise their sub-contracting opportunities.

Hints and Tips to get the most out of PCS:

1. Set up your account with an email address which is checked regularly instead of using individual email addresses. Set up an internal process for checking alert emails to make sure you do not miss an opportunity if, for example, someone is off on leave.
2. Update your account, Alert Profile and Supplier Finder Profile categories regularly so you do not miss out when new opportunities are advertised and the opportunity.

Register for an account on PCS

Take 15 minutes now to [register for a Supplier account](#) and set up your profiles.

Video Guide

Video Guide

Set up your Alert Profile on PCS

Alert Profiles are a free feature on PCS which you can use to find relevant opportunities being advertised by the public sector.

When setting up your Alert Profile you will select categories, key words and CPV codes relating to the areas you are interested in bidding for contacts under.

Once you set up your Alert Profile you will receive emails letting you know about opportunities that buyers have added to PCS when they have used these categories, key words and or CPV codes.

View the step-by-step guide on how to set up your alert profile.

Video Guide

Video Guide

Set up your Supplier Finder profile on PCS

Supplier Finder is a free feature you can use to promote yourself to buyer and setting up your Supplier Finder profile only takes a few minutes.

Once set up your Supplier Finder profile make your goods and services searchable for buyers. When a buyer is looking for suppliers for a low value quote which is also low risk, they will use the supplier finder directory to search for suppliers. If you provide the goods or services they are searching for they may select you for a Quick Quote.

View the step-by-step guide on how to set up your Supplier Finder profile.

Further PCS information and support including User Guides and Frequently Asked Questions, can be found in on the [PCS Help & Support section](#).

What Happens Next?

Quick Quotes

Buyers may use Quick Quote on PCS to obtain competitive quotes for low value purchases which are also low risk from suppliers who are registered on the website. Only suppliers selected to quote by the buyer can access the details of the contract opportunity and submit a quote. More information on this process is covered in the [quotation section of the Supplier Journey](#).

Please note that suppliers do not need to register separately in order to receive quick quotes.

Contracts

For higher value contracts (regulated procurements of £50,000 or more excluding VAT for goods and services) buyers will publish [Contract Notices](#) on PCS which give information about the planned tendering process. Registered PCS suppliers will receive emails when Contract Notices matching the commodity codes (known as CPV codes) in their profile are advertised.

Through PCS you can then:

- download the Contract Notice and other procurement documents. For example, the invitation to tender
- register your interest in the opportunity
- use the online post-box to raise questions with the buyer, (if the buyer is using PCS to manage their bids)
- bid for the contract, uploading your bid documents (if the buyer is using PCS to manage their bids).

More information on the tendering process is covered in the [Tenders](#) section of the Supplier Journey.

Quickfire Guide

Quickfire Guide

PCS-Tender

Buyers will state in their [Contract Notice](#) whether bidders have to respond to the tender via the [Public Contracts Scotland](#) or [PCS-Tender](#), and will include instructions on how to access the tender documents and respond to the opportunity.

Bidding Hints and Tips

Preparation

- investigate your sector and only bid for work that you are sure you can do
- ensure that you have registered on [Public Contracts Scotland \(PCS\)](#) by setting up a company profile. This will ensure you are notified of potential or current opportunities that are of interest to you

- research other procurement exercises which have been carried out, including who the winning supplier(s) were. This will help increase your market knowledge, including when future opportunities will be renewed
- keep your PCS Supplier Finder profile up-to-date with current information/keywords so that buyers can find you to directly invite you to quote for low value contracts
- for PCS we recommend that you use a general email address for your organisation and establish an internal process to allocate responsibility for picking these up and actioning (including cover for sickness/leave, etc.)
- investigate what training is available e.g. register with the Supplier Development Programme, if you are a micro, small or medium business and Scottish Enterprise/Business Gateway or Social Firms Scotland if you are supported business, etc.

Further preparation information can be found in [Analyse your Business](#).

All procurement exercises are different so ensure you fully read (and reread) the procurement exercise documents to understand:

- what requirements you have to meet and when?
- what documents you need to complete, and in which format, to bid?
- what are the tender timescales e.g. the timescales for being able to raise questions with the buyer? the tender deadline?
- are supplier days, site visits and/or presentations included in the process?

Some Contract Notices include the estimated budget for the contract: use this information to help you decide if your organisation should bid or not.

When completing your bid documents

- remember that your bid will be evaluated only on the information you provide as part of your bid. Previous supply, dealings, etc., with the buying organisation cannot be taken into consideration. As a result you must ensure you provide all relevant information in your bid i.e. do not assume that the buyer already knows information
- do not make assumptions. If you are unsure of anything raise a query with the buyer in good time i.e. per the timescales and methods communicated by the buyer. Please note: do not include information which can identify you or your organisation e.g. company name, as this query may be rejected by the buyer
- understand the weightings for each Award criteria. The higher the criteria weighting, the more important the criteria and more time should be allocated to this
- allow enough time to complete and respond to the procurement exercise, (including some extra time in case of issues). Do not leave working on your bid until just before the tender deadline in case of unforeseen issues: what if you encounter an unexpected delay or technical issue?
- familiarise yourself with the system being used e.g. Public Contracts Scotland
- if you are using a team for the bid, make sure they prepare, collaborate and are clear on their respective roles and the timelines involved
- plan and cost the full extent of delivering the contract to ensure that you have taken full account of overheads and resource implications
- if you have any questions, ask these of the buyer early enough in the process to be able to incorporate the response into your bid
- read and understand the question. Do not assume. If you are unsure about something raise a question with the buyer
- write your responses in the format the buyer lists in the procurement exercise e.g. if the buyer asks for the response to be no longer than 2 sides of A4 in arial font size 12, ensure that you follow these

instructions. If the buyer provides a pricing schedule (spreadsheet) for you to complete, use this spreadsheet and do not submit your responses in another format

- double-check all of your responses to make sure you have not made any mistakes, missed questions or answered questions in the wrong place
- check spelling (use a spell checker), grammar and overall appearance of your bid
- ask someone to proof read your submission. Does your bid make sense? If you or your colleagues don't understand the bid then how will the buyer?
- keep a checklist of actions/documents that are to be included in the bid (if one is not provided by the buyer) and tick these off as they are included in your bid document and/or as a separate uploaded bid attachment
- ensure all documents provided are readable, meeting the format requirements of the er (if they have been stated)
- ensure you allow enough time to upload and submit all of your bid documents before the tender submission deadline. If you encounter any technical issues you should contact the PCS (or PCS-T if appropriate) Helpdesk to highlight the issues being encountered as soon as possible to avoid a late bid
- if your bid is unclear, and the buyer asks you to explain something (normally called a clarification) respond within the timelines provided by the buyer
- make sure you meet all requirements set out by the buyer e.g. accreditations, qualifications
- try not to use general or marketing information in your bid. Tailor your response to the requirement.

After your bid has been submitted, please ensure that you have key individuals available from your organisation to answer any questions (clarifications) the buyer may raise about your bid.

Repeat Tendering

- if you have bid before, you can re-use your bid documents for another procurement exercise **but only** if they are relevant to the new exercise. All of the checking steps above still apply e.g. understand the requirements, proof reading, etc.
- proof read your bid documents to ensure they do not include any previous bid information e.g. incorrect buyer names
- you can set up a shared documents library where all relevant documents e.g. insurance certificates, are stored and are easily accessible for the next procurement exercise
- ensure all of your bid documents are kept up-to-date by checking them on a regular basis (it's a good idea to set standard calendar reminders for checks and before the expiry of documents e.g. insurance certificates)
- whether you win or lose a procurement exercise it is good to have a lessons learned session with your bid team. All learnings - positive and negative – should be logged and made available for future procurement exercises.

Learn More About Your Market

Being registered on PCS is not a guarantee of business. You will still need to undertake marketing and networking activities to grow your organisation. Find out more about the opportunities that are out there by understanding your market, your competitors and public sector buyers. Please refer to [Understand the Market](#) for more information.

Guidance on Public Procurement for SMEs and Third Sector Suppliers

The Scottish Government's Procurement and Commercial Policy & Strategy Division has created Guidance on Public Procurement for SME's and Third Sector Suppliers (this can be accessed at the bottom of this page).

This document includes the sources of support available for SME's and Third Sector to help bid for and win public sector contracts.

If you have any questions on this document please contact: procurementbestpractice@gov.scot

Get Some Training and Support

There are several organisations who provide training, advice and support for free on bidding for public sector contracts. Further details can be found in [Support Available](#).

[Guidance on Public Procurement for SMEs and Third Sector Suppliers.docxDownload Document](#)

(149.25 KB / file type:docx)