FAQs

How Do I Find Out About Contract Opportunities?

Scottish public sector contracts worth £50,000 (excluding VAT) and above for goods and services must be advertised on Public Contracts Scotland (PCS). You can either browse for opportunities or register as a supplier by creating a profile. When you create your profile it is also important that you sign up to receive automatic e-mail alerts about:

- relevant public sector opportunities
- sub-contract opportunities with main contractors in the private sector performing large public sector contracts
- contract awards telling you what company won the contract, enabling you to follow up any potential sub-contracting opportunities.

How Do I Register on Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) for Quick Quotes?

Buyers can also use PCS to contact suppliers directly with requests for quotations (Quick Quotes) for low value contracts which are also low risk. There is no separate registration for Quick Quotes, however it is recommended that you complete an enhanced profile known as a Supplier Finder Profile.

The Supplier Finder Profile allows you to build on the information in your company profile by providing buyers with detailed information regarding the goods or services which you can provide to the public sector.

Completing a Supplier Finder Profile may enhance your chances of being invited to quote.

I Have Registered on PCS but I Haven't Received Any Alerts. Why?

There may be several reasons for this, such as:

- there have been no opportunities advertised that match your business profile
- the categories you have selected may need to be amended
- you have not signed up for alerts (for more information on how to do this please refer to the PCS user guide)
- there is currently no need for what you offer within the public sector

You can:

- see what contracts organisations have in place by checking their Contract Registers (some organisations publish these on PCS, others on their own websites)
- update/change the categories you have selected (please find more information below in the next question and response)
- speak to public sector buyers and ask what their requirements are
- check your details are up-to-date
- consider making your PCS contact e-mail address a general email address that several people in your organisation can access, so that an opportunity is not missed if an individual is absent, or if they leave your organisation, etc.
- make sure PCS emails from support@publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk are getting to your inbox and are not being quarantined by your organisation's firewall or spam filter.

I Don't Know If I Have Selected the Right Categories for PCS Alerts

Look at published notices in PCS to see if there were contracts that you would have been interested in but that you weren't alerted to. You should then check what categories were used for these and update your profile.

Do I Need to Register Separately for PCS-Tender (from Public Contracts Scotland)?

Yes. PCS-Tender (PCS-T) is a separate system from Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) but once you have registered on both systems you can activate integrated

sign-on between them – user guides are available on both systems to help you do this.

Who Buys for the Scottish Public Sector?

- within the public sector, there are goods and services that every organisation needs to buy e.g. stationery, electricity, furniture, etc. These national frameworks and contracts (called category A) are let by Procurement Scotland, and any public sector organisation can choose to buy from them
- at the next level down there are goods and services that are specific to each individual sector (Central Government, Local Government, NHS, and Colleges and Universities) e.g. all local authorities need bin lorries. These sectoral contracts (called Category B) are let by the individual Centres of Expertise for each sector (see table)
- at the level below that, some organisations will collaborate at a regional/local level e.g. Tayside Procurement Consortium is the collaborative arm of the three Tayside councils. These contracts are called category C1
- at the lowest level, individual organisations let contracts for their own needs only. These are called Category C.

Category A	Collaborative Contracts available to all public bodies • Scottish Procurement
Category B	Collaborative Contracts available to public bodies within a specific sector • Scottish Procurement • APUC • Scotland Excel • NHS National Procurement
Category C	Local Contracts for use by individual public bodies
Category C1	Local or regional collaborations between public bodies

I Have a Question Regarding a Tender Opportunity. How Do I Contact the Buyer?

If your question is regarding a live tender published via PCS or PCS-Tender (PCS-T), you should raise all questions via PCS or PCS-T. You should write and publish your query via the postbox facility in these systems. Your questions will then go directly to the buyer who will answer your question.

Please note that when responding the buyer will normally publish their response to allow all interested bidders to see the question raised and the buyer response (unless the query is specific to your organisation). This is to promote fairness and transparency i.e. ensure that all potential bidders receive the same information from the buyer.

As a result, please do not include any personal, commercial or sensitive information in the query.

The Notice for the tender opportunity will contain information regarding the buyer's contact details.

I Have a Question About a Tender I Have Bid For. Who Do I Contact?

You should always contact the buyer for the tender in the first instance.

The Single Point of Enquiry (SPoE) - is an impartial point of contact where suppliers can seek advice or raise concerns about a procurement exercise carried out by a public body. It is important to note that the SPoE does not have any legal powers regarding tender decisions but can work with buying organisations to try to resolve concerns in an informal manner.

How Do I Find Out About Tender Opportunities Outside of Scotland?

Contracts worth at or more than the higher value regulated procurement thresholds are advertised by Scottish public bodies via PCS to the whole of the UK.

Tenders Electronic Daily (TED) publishes Europe-wide contract opportunities.

Some public sector procurement officers will also advertise their procurement exercises, future plans etc. on their own organisation's website.

What is the SPD?

The Single Procurement Document (SPD) is a standard form for use throughout the UK, which replaces pre-qualification questionnaires, and should make the process of bidding for a public contract easier. Its purpose is to remove some of the barriers to participation in public procurement, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

All Scottish public bodies issue and accept the SPD form for all higher value regulated procurement exercises, and it is best practice for regulated (£50k and above excluding VAT for goods and services) procurements.

It should make the process of bidding for a public contract easier by allowing bidders to self-declare that they meet selection and exclusion criteria, without the need to provide evidence at that stage.

Bidders can re-use question responses previously submitted for another competition, so long as the information is still correct.

Where Do I Find a Copy of the SPD?

Buyers will include the SPD that you need to complete and submit with the procurement exercise and will include instructions on sourcing the SPD.

Buyers can use one of two versions of the SPD in their procurement exercise as follows:

- **PCS** includes an online SPD Module. The SPD questions are loaded into PCS, which allows you to create your answers on-line in an electronic form
- **PCS-Tender (PCS-T)** includes an electronic version of the SPD. If using PCS-T the buyer will include their on-line SPD and you will respond by entering your responses in PCS-T. This SPD is available on PCS-Tender.

Do I Need to Complete a New SPD Every Time I Bid?

Yes. Each SPD is configured to suit the requirements of that individual procurement exercise. Therefore, suppliers will be expected to submit an individual SPD response that relates to those particular questions and requirements each time they bid.

Where the buyer uses the online PCS module or PCS-Tender, suppliers will be able to store and reuse their answers to the SPD's standard questions.

Do I Need to Answer Every Question in the SPD?

Yes. The questions included in an SPD have been deemed relevant to the particular procurement exercise. As a result the buyer will be assessing all bidders responses based on these questions.

I Don't Understand Some of the SPD Questions. What Do I Do?

Check the Contract Notice and any other tender documents you may have been provided from the buyer to confirm if any additional information there covers your question.

However never assume what a question is asking: an incorrect response could make the difference between your bid proceeding or not. If you are unsure, raise a clarification via the PCS post-box (or PCS-T postbox), within the timelines the procurement officer has publishing for raising clarifications.

How Does the SPD Work?

If the buyer is using PCS-Tender for their procurement exercise, then they will set out the specific requirements and minimum standards that are relevant and proportionate for the procurement exercise in the Contract Notice.

If the buyer is using the online SPD Module on Public Contracts Scotland the above is not necessary as the relevant information is contained within this Module.

If using PCS-T, the buyers must set out the specific requirements and minimum standards that are relevant and proportionate for the procurement exercise in the Contract Notice.

The buyer will then publish an SPD which is relevant to their procurement exercise and make it available for anyone interested in bidding for their contract.

Bidders will complete and submit their SPD response to the buyer, using one of the three methods outlined above. The buyer will then assess the bidders suitability against the selection and exclusion criteria.

The SPD can be issued to bidders within a tender document (when using an Open Procedure) or before the tender document is issued i.e. it is the first stage of a Restricted Procedure, Competitive Dialogue, Competitive Procedure with Negotiation or Innovative Partnership Procedure.

Will I Be Asked for Proof that my SPD Self Declaration is True?

By law, a winning bidder has to submit all of the required certificates and documentation before they are awarded a contract. Bidders can be asked to submit their evidence at any point in the procurement process, if this is necessary to ensure that the process is carried out properly. In a Restricted, or two-stage, procedure, it is likely that those bidders which are shortlisted will be asked to submit their evidence at that stage.

From 18 October 2018, bidders are not required to submit supporting documentation which an organisation already has in its possession.

What Happens If a Shortlisted or Successful Bidder is Found to Have Misrepresented Itself?

This will depend on what the issue is. Further information is provided below:

- If it emerges that a bidder is actually in one of the situations which is a mandatory ground for exclusion, or if it does not meet one of the minimum selection criteria, then that bidder must be excluded from the competition. Depending on the nature and stage of the competition, that may mean

either that it proceeds without that bidder, or that competition should be re-evaluated without that bidder's tender
- If it emerges that a business is in one of the situations which is a discretionary ground for exclusion, then the decision about whether or not to exclude that bidder will be up to the public body on a case by case basis
- If the issue is more administrative in nature e.g. mistakes in providing the documentation, then the authority will have the option of inviting the bidder to supplement or clarify the documentation provided.

Is the SPD Available on PCS-Tender?

Yes, a fully electronic version of the SPD is available on PCS-Tender.

Do Sub-Contractors Complete an SPD?

For higher value regulated procurement exercises, if a bidder proposes to sub-contract part of a contract, and relies on the capacity of that sub-contractor in order to fulfil the selection criteria, a separate SPD - sections I, II and III - must be completed. It is up to the buyer whether to request the completion of the additional SPD sections. buyers can elect to ask for separate SPD's if relevant and proportionate to the procurement.

If a sub-contractor is not relied upon, it is the buyers decision whether to request any parts of the SPD e.g. I, II, III or more i.e. whether it is relevant and proportionate to do so.

For below threshold procurement exercises, the buyer may ask for a separate SPD from each sub-contractor if it is relevant and proportionate to do so.

If not using the online SPD module in PCS buyers must specify in the Contract Notice whether separate SPD are required for sub-contractors.

Does a Consortium Need to Complete an SPD?

A separate SPD response must be submitted from all Group, Consortia, Joint Venture or similar members and any other entities on which the bidder relies to

meet the selection criteria.

The buyer may choose to request a separate SPD from any other sub-contractor i.e. on those which the bidder does not rely on to meet the selection criteria, in order to verify whether or not there are grounds for excluding them.

If a sub-contractor is in one of the situations which would lead to its mandatory exclusion, the bidder will be required to replace that sub-contractor.

How are Completed SPDs Submitted?

The buyer will have specified how to complete and submit the SPD provided i.e. either:

- via the online SPD module in PCS
- via the SPD questions included on-line in PCS-Tender

Where several SPDs have to be submitted e.g. as a result of relying on a sub-contractor and/or due to being a group bid, it is the responsibility of the main bidder to collate and submit all of the completed SPD documents.