

Successful Tendering Guide
**Preparation and
Understanding the Market**

Contents

Introduction	1
Is your business ready?	2
Benefits of tendered work	3
Tools	6
BUILD to Win Guide	6
Tender Readiness Form	6
Preparation	10
Understanding the Tendering (Procurement) Process from the Buyer's Perspective	10
The Buyer Pre-Procurement Process	12
The Different EU Procurement Routes	12
Framework Agreements/Contracts	15
Common Elements of Standard Tender Documentation	16
The Tender Submission Process	17
The Evaluation Process	17
Deciding on the Target Market(s)	19
Explore Potential Partnerships	19
A Buyer Profile	19
Establish and Maintain a Tender Awareness System	22
Alert Emails	22
Appendix A: BUILD to Win guide	24
Appendix B: Useful tendering websites	28

Introduction

Tendering for contracts is a key business development strategy in the growth and success of many of today's businesses. With the exception of small, low value contracts, tendering is the procurement route now chosen by many private and public sector organisations seeking new supplier contracts.

By issuing a tender the Buyer can ensure that the process is fair and open and that value for money is achieved. A contract should bring maximum benefit to the organisation, not only taking the cost into account, but also considering other factors such as quality, efficiency savings, sustainability and effectiveness.

For many suppliers, the prospect of tendering can be daunting, but by investing some time and effort in understanding the process, and in being prepared, the rewards can be significant.

This guide provides best practice practical guidance, combined with forms and checklists to help suppliers through the key stages in the tendering process, and to provide the confidence, skills and know-how that businesses need to consistently produce winning bids.

Remember, however, that while tendering is vitally important, it is also important to ensure that the profile of your business is kept high. For example, promotional materials should be relevant and professional and websites should reflect your company's experience, ethos, certifications and key projects you have won.

Is your business ready?

Tendering requires a commitment of valuable resources, time and people in planning for, researching, and preparing the tender documentation.

Your business needs to have the capacity to make this necessary commitment, and to be honest about its capabilities, otherwise significant time, resource and focus can be wasted.

Winning contracts can have a significant positive business impact, however, repeatedly being unsuccessful, or winning a contract which stretches a business to its limit, can significantly weaken a business.

Benefits of tendered work

- Contracted work tends to be of a higher value than non-contract work.
- Contracting organisations tend to be good customers, well established and financially stable. They are less likely to be hit by economic ups and downs and tend to pay on time as per agreed contract terms.
- Applying for tenders can encourage organisations to develop partnerships, explore different markets and extend their capabilities.
- Contracting organisations tend to seek out innovative products and services. Tendering suppliers need to be continually thinking of new ways of doing things.
- Focusing the business on implementing a value for money philosophy will improve the business's overall service provision. Areas will include improved quality standards and processes, and an emphasis on efficiencies and sustainability.

Before making a serious commitment to tendering, you should have a good understanding of your business's position in the marketplace and of its strengths and weaknesses. This will allow you to make an honest assessment of your ability to win. By taking this approach, your business can develop the right strategies, and will have the right systems in place to maximise success.

Examples of areas to consider:

Do we understand the financial and cash flow implications of tendering?

During the early stages of a contract, significant financial outlay may be required to train or recruit new staff, to purchase more equipment, or to increase stock levels - with the return on investment only coming later. Your business must be in a position to sustain this upfront investment.

Do we have the necessary experience of delivering the type of contracts we wish to bid for?

If not, consider how the business can gain the right experience and develop reference sites which can be used in a proposal. You can do this by applying for similar, lower-value contracts, or by partnering or sub-contracting with a more experienced supplier who complements your product or service. Also consider the impact of moving into new areas, either geographically or into a new target market, or by introducing new business processes, which takes the business out of its comfort zone.

Do we meet the necessary legislative requirements and have we quality systems in place which are required by a typical target contract?

If not, research typical requirements and seek advice if necessary on how to obtain the necessary accreditations and put industry standard, best practice quality systems in place.

Requirements may include having a quality management system, such as ISO 9001, or holding membership of an industry accredited body. Some of these can take significant effort and time to achieve and therefore need to be planned for, before starting to tender for contracts.

Are we offering something different to our competitors?

If not, examine your product/service carefully and consider how the business can develop areas of particular expertise, or strengths, so that it will stand out from the competition.

Do we have the necessary skilled and experienced staff to deliver the contract and to complete the tender documentation?

If not, identify the skills and expertise required and build these into your future recruitment skills requirement list. Alternatively, consider sending existing staff on training courses or secondments where they can learn on the job.

Are we already known to the organisations we wish to do business with?

If not, consider ways in which you can raise your profile with these organisations. You may wish to try to meet the Buyers in order to introduce your company to them, or send them some marketing material, or actively seek 'Meet the Buyer' or networking events where they will be present.

Are our existing supply chain and methodologies strong enough to service a typical contract?

Undertake a review of your current supply base and systems and analyse their robustness against the requirements of a large contract.

Explore alternative suppliers, distribution channels and facilities in order to build extra capacity and contingencies. You will need to demonstrate these as part of future tender submissions.

Do we have the financial standing to support the delivery of a contract?

If not, work towards developing the stability needed. Consider when making future investments whether they fit in with your tendering goals. A good trading history is commonly checked as part of the tendering process, with businesses usually asked to provide copies of the past two or three years' audited accounts. If your business has had a 'shaky' financial history or is a start-up then there is going to be less of a chance of success. However, if the business is currently financially stable then consider alternative ways of providing evidence that it is in a position to support a potential contract, such as a letter from the bank, accounts of previously owned businesses, etc.

If you conclude that your business is not ready yet, then don't rush into tendering.

- Create a list of the areas that require further development and identify the actions needed and timeframe.
- Explore the possibility of collaborating with another business and perhaps preparing a joint tender to fill the gaps in expertise and experience.
- Take a long-term view and research potential Buyers and identify suitable tender contracts which you would like to aim for in the future. Find out the contract expiry date and work towards being ready for the next renewal date.
- Review your business's readiness for tendering on a regular basis.

Some common myths

SMEs never win contracts

Many small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have been slow to participate in tendering, often as a result of lack of knowledge of where to source the opportunities, a lack of understanding of the process and confidence in how best to respond. As a result only a quarter of all SMEs have ever tendered for government contracts.

However, when they do apply, they often have a good chance of succeeding with 59% of local government contracts and 22% of central government contracts now serviced by SMEs and 16% of EU contracts being won by micro businesses (fewer than 10 employees).

Many tendering organisations have recently become more committed to helping SMEs and have introduced initiatives to help them to understand the process better. Such initiatives have included online support documents, workshops and Meet the Buyer events. These organisations recognise that many smaller businesses have much to offer, in terms of innovation, personal service, flexibility and value for money.

It is always the same companies that win tenders

This is simply due to the fact that it is often the same suppliers tendering for the available contracts. With recent changes in introducing new standards and better educating suppliers, the tendering process is now much more open, fair and more competitive.

Tendering organisations want to see new suppliers tendering:

- to increase the competition;
- to improve value for money;
- to replace underperforming suppliers; and
- to access new products and services.

Tools

BUILD to Win Guide

Invest NI has provided a separate BUILD to Win guide for larger organisations which provides comprehensive assistance and decision-making tools to help organisations assess their position. Further information about the BUILD to Win guide can be found in Appendix A.

Tender Readiness Form

Your responses to the following questions will help you establish if your company is ready to bid.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	
Can we cope with financial and cashflow implications of tendering? Could we cope with potential currency fluctuations, interest rate changes, increases in cost of production?	Yes No
Do we have the financial standing to support the delivery of a contract?	Yes No
Is our credit rating good?	Yes No
Do we have the right type and value of insurance in place?	Yes No
How many years audited accounts do we have?	
Identified actions Action Point 1 etc.	

OPERATIONS	
Are our existing supply chain and methodologies strong enough to service a typical contract?	Yes No
Do we have the capacity to support a large contract?	Yes No
Is there potential to establish partnerships to strengthen our position and as a backup?	Yes No
Would our suppliers and sub-contractors meet the standards required?	Yes No
Do we have documented operational systems and procedures in place?	Yes No
Do our products/service promote sustainability?	Yes No
Are there any technical barriers to be addressed?	Yes No
Do we have sufficient resources, time and tendering expertise to introduce tendering into the business?	Yes No
Identified actions Action Point 1 etc...	

THE MARKET	
Is there increasing demand for our service/product?	Yes No
Are there opportunities in the market?	Yes No
Are our competitors strong?	Yes No
Identified actions Action Point 1 etc...	

EXPERIENCE	
Do we have the necessary experience of delivering the type of contracts we wish to bid for? Can we get good references?	Yes No
Do we have the necessary skilled and experienced staff to deliver the contract?	Yes No
Do our staff have the relevant professional memberships and certifications?	Yes No
Identified actions Action Point 1 etc...	

STANDARDS / LEGISLATIVE / ACCREDITATIONS	
Do we have industry recognised quality systems in place? Do we need to be ISO accredited?	Yes No
Do we have a Health and Safety Policy?	Yes No
Do we have an Environmental Policy?	Yes No
Do we have a Sustainability Policy?	Yes No
Do we have all other necessary legislative requirements in place? For example, intellectual property protection?	Yes No
Have we won any industry awards?	Yes No
Identified actions Action Point 1 etc....	

WHY US?

Are we already known to the organisations we wish to do business with?	Yes No
Are we offering something different to our competitors?	Yes No
Are we innovative enough?	Yes No

Identified actions

Action Point 1 etc....

OUR UNIQUE SELLING POINTS (USP)

List USPS

ASSESSMENT / CONCLUSION

Preparation

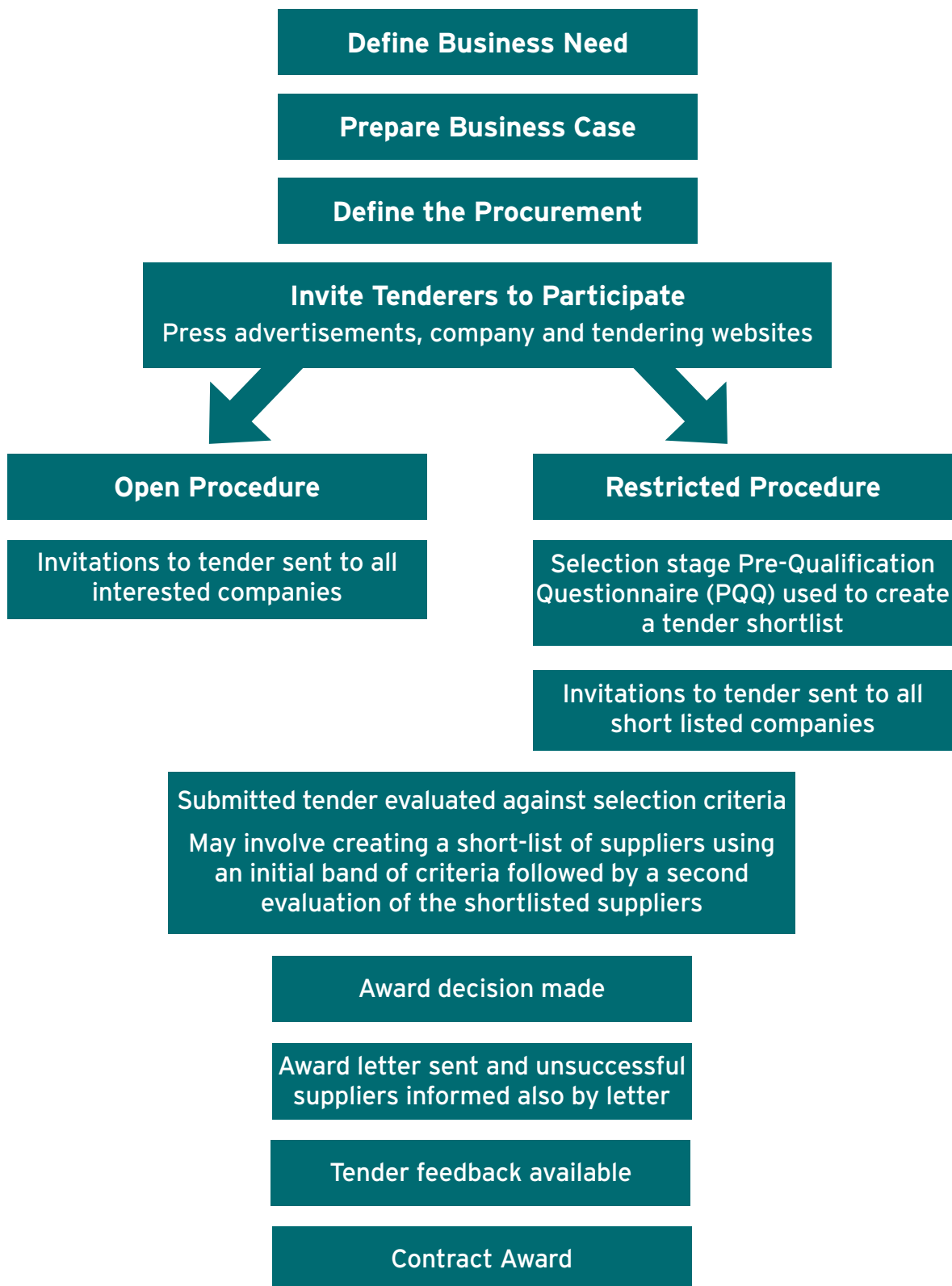
Is your business ready?
If Yes, now prepare for tendering opportunities.

Preparation will not only speed up the process, but also ensure that fewer mistakes are made and help in creating a more considered submission. It involves:

1. Understanding the tendering (procurement) process.
2. Knowing your business's strengths.
3. Deciding on the target market(s).
4. Understanding the Buyer.
5. Creating a repository of standard company information.
6. Setting up a bid team.
7. Establishing and maintaining a tender awareness system.

Understanding the Tendering (Procurement) Process from the Buyer's Perspective

Being aware of the overall tendering process, understanding what **Buyers** are looking for and the criteria they apply when choosing their suppliers is a vital part of preparation. The following diagram shows the typical procurement process from the **Buyer's** perspective.



The Buyer Pre-Procurement Process

Typically before procurement can start, the Buyer or buying department is required to prepare an internal business case, which will present a preferred procurement option based on identifying the options available and assessing the best solution. Buyers at this stage may consult with suppliers in order to better understand the products/ services available and identify future trends.

The business case, together with relevant guidelines (for example EU-procurement!), will help the Buyer identify the most appropriate procurement route and provide key scoping information and criteria to be used during the procurement process. The European public sector procurement rules are intended to promote fair and open competition and a single European market.

It should be noted that the EC public sector Procurement Directives give effect to the European Union's obligations under the World Trade Organisation's Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) and bidders from signatory countries have equivalent rights to those from Member States of the European Union.

- The Rules which affect public sector procurement consist of:
 - The EC Treaty (the Treaty establishing the European Community signed on 25 March 1957 as amended by the Community Treaties).
 - The EU Procurement Directives.

The Different EU Procurement Routes

1. Open Procedure

The main points are:

- Closing date for receipt of bids must be no earlier than 52 days from the day after the date of dispatch of advert to the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU).
- Invitation to Tender (ITT) documents must be issued to all companies requesting them.
- ITT to be issued by Buyer within 6 days of request.
- If there has been a Prior Information Notice (see below) published not less than 52 days previously and no longer than 1 year ago, then the 52 day period that must elapse before bids can be received is reduced to 36 days (or 22 days in exceptionally justified cases).
- Reductions in timescales are available if documents and adverts are sent electronically.

Pre-qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) Document

A PQQ is used where the Buyer wishes to draw up a short list of companies who will be invited to tender.

The criteria used during pre-qualification, generally relates to the supplier's financial, technical and/or professional capabilities and capacity to deliver. PQQ application requirements tend to consist of one or more standardised forms, allowing easy comparison and assessment. The information requested usually consists of the following:

- **Basic company details** - business name, status and structure of the organisation, office locations and key personnel.
- **Experience** - evidence of previous experience of similar projects, references, quality systems and accreditations, evidence of specialist skills and competencies, professional accreditations.
- **Resources** - staffing information, staffing policies, details regarding specialist facilities and resources, evidence of insurances and professional indemnities.
- **Financial** - evidence of financial position - copies of two or three years' of audited accounts, and possibly cashflow forecasts.
- **Certifications** - e.g: Quality, Health and Safety and Environmental certificates.

2. Restricted Procedure

This is a two stage process:

- i. The Buyer selects a number of suitably experienced, qualified companies (shortlisting), and
- ii. The Buyer invites those selected companies to submit proposals.

Stage 1

- Buyer prepares advert and sends it to the OJEU.
- A minimum of 37 days, starting from the day after the advert is sent to the OJEU, must be allowed for companies to request to be considered for shortlisting.
- Shortlisting is on the basis of looking at the company's capacity, not how they propose to meet the contract. Therefore, this is a process that is backward looking, not forward looking. The Buyer cannot consider matters relating to the expected nature of the contract at this stage.
- There must be a minimum of five companies shortlisted (where there are at least five suitably qualified, experienced companies).
- Reductions in timescales are available if documents and adverts are sent electronically.

Stage 2

- Buyer issues ITT documents to the shortlisted companies.
- A minimum of 40 days must be elapse before bidders can be asked to submit their tenders.
- Reductions in timescales are available if documents and adverts are sent electronically.

3. Negotiated Procedure

This can only be used in exceptional circumstances:

- Under the Supplies Directive, it is difficult to justify use of this procedure.
- Under Works and Services Directive, the Negotiated Procedure can be used in a number of limited circumstances.

There are two types of Negotiated Procedure:

- i. Negotiated Procedure with call for competition, and
- ii. Negotiated Procedure without call for competition.

Negotiated Procedure with Call for Competition

This is a two stage process:

Stage 1

- Buyer prepares advert and sends it to the OJEU.
- A minimum of 37 days, starting from the day after the advert is sent to OJEU, must be allowed for companies to request to be considered for shortlisting.
- Shortlisting is on the basis of looking at the company's capacity, not how they propose to meet the contract. Therefore, this is a process that is backward looking, not forward looking i.e. the Buyer cannot consider matters relating to the expected nature of the contract at this stage.

There must be a minimum of three companies shortlisted (where there are at least three suitably qualified, experienced companies).

Stage 2

- The Buyer enters into negotiations with the company/companies with a view to agreeing on the terms of a contract.
- There is no specified time period for this stage of the process.

This procedure can be used:

- where a restricted or open procedure has failed;
- where overall pricing is not possible; and
- where specifications cannot be drawn up with sufficient precision to enable bidders to submit proposals without further discussion/dialogue.

Negotiated Procedure without a Call for Competition

The Buyer does not place an advert in the OJEU. Instead, a company is identified by the awarding body to enter into negotiations with a view to agreeing the terms of a contract.

Please note that for Restricted and Negotiated Procedures the response time may be shortened by up to 5 days if a Prior Information Notice (PIN) has been issued.

Framework Agreements/Contracts

- Now recognised formally in the Directives
- Definition:

“An agreement or other arrangement between one or more contracting authorities and one or more economic operators which establishes the terms (in particular the terms as to price and, where appropriate, quantity) under which the economic operator will enter into one or more contracts with the contracting authority in the period during which the framework agreement applies”.

Types of Framework Agreement

Framework Agreements can take one of two forms:

- A single supplier framework (might be suitable for procurement of complex or sophisticated services and/or where requirement involves close relationship or big upfront investment on the supplier’s side).
- A multi-supplier framework (might be suitable for procurement of standard supplies and/or where the requirement could not be met by a single supplier).

Setting up a Framework Agreement

The Buyer can establish a Framework Agreement using the Open, Restricted, Negotiated or Competitive Dialogue procedures, but note that:

- The value of the framework is the estimated value of all contracts envisaged to be awarded under the agreement during its duration.
- The duration of the framework must

be limited to four years except in “exceptional circumstances”.

- There is a requirement that frameworks should not be used improperly or to prevent, restrict or distort competition.

Single Supplier Framework Agreements - Call-offs

- Call-off/specific contracts are awarded: “within the limits of the terms laid down in the framework agreement” but the Buyer may also consult the supplier in writing requesting them to supplement their tender as necessary.

Multi-supplier Framework Agreements - Call-offs

Call-off contracts can be awarded either:

- by application of the terms set out in the agreement itself; or
- where not all the terms are set out in the framework agreement, by mini competition.

Multi-supplier Framework Agreements - Mini Competition Call-offs

- The Buyer re-opens the competition between the economic operators which are parties to the framework agreement and which are capable of performing the proposed call-off contract.
- The call off must be placed with the tenderer who has submitted the best tender in accordance with the award criteria which should have been set out in the framework agreement.
- The Buyer cannot just change matters which have been agreed as part of the framework agreement itself, when awarding call-offs.

E-Auctions

This is where suppliers are asked to bid against each other on the pricing element of a tender and will occur at the end of the procurement process.

Suppliers are asked to submit confidential bids during a live on-line event and are then ranked in relation to the other participants. Based on their ranking, suppliers can choose to re-submit bids, continually lowering their price.

In the final evaluation, quality and other criteria are also considered to ensure price alone is not the deciding factor in awarding the contract. This procurement method can only be used when the requirement specification is very clearly defined.

Common Elements of Standard Tender Documentation

Tender documentation tends to comprise a number of standard documents and forms commonly used by most tendering bodies. These include:

- **Instructions to Tenderers**
 - Contains the precise instructions to be followed during the tender process, including when the closing date is, how to submit the tender, the required tender format etc.
- **Specification / Project Brief**, generally includes:
 - Background information regarding the tendering body, and the context of the requirement/project.
 - A description of the goods/services required.
 - Requirements in relation to staff training, recruitment etc.
- **Terms and Conditions of Contract**
 - Policies and procedures to be considered such as health and safety, confidentiality agreements.
 - Contract monitoring, management and quality control requirements.
 - Details of the evaluation criteria, how the importance of each is weighted, for example quality, cost, methodology etc.
 - Any other details relevant to the contract, for example timescales, meetings, progress reports and delivery schedules.
- **Form of Tender**
 - Contains the general terms and conditions of the contract to which the successful supplier and the tendering body must adhere during the duration of the contract.
 - Some typical terms and conditions will include obligations of the parties, timescale/meeting milestones, payments, insurance requirements, monitoring of service, provision for termination, and conflict of interests and resolution of disputes.
- **Schedule of Prices**
 - The basis of the offer from the supplier to the tendering body to provide the service as stated within the tender submission, should it be accepted.
 - The supplier is required to sign and date the Form of Tender document.
- **Schedule of Prices**
 - Varies from one tender to another, but generally is a list of all items associated with the project, which must be individually priced.

The Tender Submission Process

There are two common methods of submitting a tender to the Buyer:

- Presenting a printed document or documents delivered in a sealed envelope to the Buyer's office, or
- Submitting the tender electronically using a specially designed procurement web portal.

Hard copy submissions

If hard copy proposals are required, clear instructions will be provided within the tendering documentation as to the format, number of copies, delivery address and packaging and delivery requirements. These instructions are extremely important and must be adhered to, otherwise the tender will be rejected.

The presentation of the tender proposal is key, and gives the evaluation team an overall impression of the professionalism of the business, so a little thought and preparation in this area is worthwhile.

Presentation options:

- Designing a branded file cover to use to present the proposal in.
- Sourcing a local printer who will be able to print and professionally present the final proposal document.
- Designing your own template and investing in a colour printer and binding machine.

Electronic submissions/ e-tendering

Increasingly, tenders are being managed and submitted online through specialist procurement web portals.

The submission procedures on these portals are not always easy to follow. In order to be well prepared, businesses should register in advance and familiarise themselves about how to use and navigate through the various functions. E-tendering portals allow tenderers to complete online questionnaires and upload various tender documents.

There is nothing stopping a business familiarising themselves with the process by pretending that they are going to apply for a tender without actually submitting - just remember not to press the submit button!

The Evaluation Process

Once submitted, the tendering body will go through a rigorous, systematic evaluation process. Firstly, any tenders which were late, or where any mandatory information is missing will be **eliminated**.

The tender documentation clearly states the criteria that the Buyer will use to evaluate each bid, and their associated weightings. The criteria will include cost and a number of quality/technical criteria (usually two to four) which the Buyer considers key to determining the best solution.

Examples of quality criteria include:

- Technical solution
- Quality systems
- Methodology
- Experience

The weightings are usually presented as percentages, representing the marks available for each, and their relative importance.

A scoring matrix is created by the tendering body providing space for the evaluation panel to make notes and to score each bid using an agreed scoring system. Each member of the panel usually scores each bid independently, making notes justifying their score. These notes will be used to provide feedback to the bidders.

The panel will usually then meet to review the individual scores, and to reach an agreement on a moderated score, taking into account each panel member's perspective.

In cases where further clarification is required, the tendering body may approach the bidder and ask for clarification. The bidder is not permitted to supply any further details (no matter how important) after the submission date, unless asked by the tendering body.

Tender Award

The tendering body will announce the award decision via an award letter to the successful bidder and 'regret' letters to the remaining unsuccessful bidders. Both letters should provide an overview of the scoring outcomes from the evaluation process and reasons why the decision was made. In some instances there may be a standstill period during which time bidders can ask for further feedback or ask questions regarding the award decision. After this the contract is formally awarded.

Even if a supplier does not submit a bid, it is possible to find out who won a particular contract if the tender was advertised on one of the tender websites. As well as advertising current opportunities these websites also advertise contract awards, therefore allowing anyone who has access to search for contract award information.

Typically information available will include:

- How many companies tendered.
- The contract duration.
- The winning value of the contract.
- The name of the company that won and its contact details.

This information is not only valuable marketing information, but provides contact details which can be used to contact the successful supplier to find out if you can work with them in any way or supply them with support in the future.

Feedback

As a matter of course, every bidder should always ask for feedback, even those who have won.

This feedback will help increase the bidder's understanding of what is required by the tendering body, the standards expected, and will help the bidder to continuously improve their tendering process.

Knowing your Business Strengths

Undertaking a thorough assessment of your business's strengths and weaknesses using a standard Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis tool will help you identify what differentiates it from the competition.

Your business's Unique Selling Points should be developed and communicated clearly throughout all tender documents. These are the reasons why the Buyer should purchase from you rather than from your competitors. It is useful to develop these strengths into a number of 'Why Us?' statements, which can be prepared in advance and revised for each tender as required.

As well as understanding your business's strengths, it is also important to identify weaknesses. Ways of mitigating against these weaknesses should be carefully considered.

Deciding on the Target Market(s)

By spending time understanding various markets, you can identify which market sectors your business is best strategically suited to service initially and in the future. This will also help you to develop a more targeted tender document based on your research into the particular market.

Some market differentiators to consider are:

- Geographical region
- Public and private sector
- Public sector divisions - central government, local government, education, health, quangos etc
- Private sector industries - transport, construction, events etc
- Size

Explore Potential Partnerships

Depending on the target market and your business's requirements, it may be necessary to explore potential strategic partnerships with complementary businesses locally and in different geographical areas. Establishing a strong partnership can take time and ideally should be tested prior to committing to a significant contract. You should think of ways of sourcing and testing partnership arrangements, potentially through smaller contracts or one-off projects.

Understand Specific Buyer Requirements

Having identified the most appropriate target market(s), you should take time to familiarise yourself with the Buyers in that market, developing a profile of each Buyer.

A Buyer Profile

General

- Who they are? - Find out what size and kind of organisation(s) they are.
- What they do? - It helps to have an understanding of what their organisation is trying to achieve, their values and objectives.

Buying cycle and process

- What do they buy and why? - If you know why customers buy a product or service, it's easier to match their needs to the benefits your business can offer.
- When do they buy? - Is there a particular time of year (possibly beginning of financial year) when many tenders are published?
- How do they buy? - Where do they advertise? Do they use Framework Agreements?
- Who makes the decisions? Is procurement centrally managed or departmental? Do they buy for themselves or for other departments/ organisations as well?

Competition

- From whom are they currently buying?

Expectations

- What do they expect of suppliers? How do they operate?
- What are their priorities when buying? What influences their purchasing decisions? Do they have a procurement strategy?
- How important is sustainability and environmental considerations? If these are important you should spend time putting the right policies in place, and consider how your business can work within these objectives.

Standards and Policies

- Do they require any particular policy requirements? For example, health and safety or environmental policies. If your business employs five or more people you should have a health and safety policy in place.
- What are their specific quality requirements? Is it mandatory to be ISO accredited? Do they expect evidence of a quality management system? To improve your chances of success, you should have in place a quality management system ensuring a consistent and professional approach in the delivery of their products and services. The implementation of accredited systems such as ISO 9001 is advisable. However, for smaller organisations such systems are often too resource intensive to implement and maintain, but can be replaced by a number of well-documented procedures covering the key areas of operations which can be implemented throughout the business.
- What accreditations do they expect?

And Finally

- What does the Buyer know about you? Can you make them aware of your company's capabilities before you tender? This could be achieved through very focused direct mailings with follow-up requesting a meeting, through Meet the Buyer events or through targeted ezines.

Create a Repository of Basic Company Information

The information you provide in a tender response is generally a mix of generic business information together with specific details on how you will deliver the particular product or service required by the tender. The more generic elements of the tender documentation can often be reused or revised, saving time and effort in the preparation of subsequent proposals.

It is useful to store this information in a computer's folder system or repository which can be continually updated with the most recent information in readiness for the next tender opportunity.

Key folders should include:

- **Staffing details:** containing the CVs and pen pics of staff members and associates who potentially could be used in the delivery of a contract. You should develop a standard CV template for your business providing scanned copies of relevant personal documents such as licences, membership certificates and staff accreditations should also be stored within this folder area.
- **Company policy statements:** containing copies of all key company policies, such as quality, health and safety, environmental, fair employment and sustainability policies.
- **Technical specifications:** copies of generic technical information on equipment or standard technical procedures/systems which are commonly used in your business.
- **Quality:** copies of all quality standards and procedures.
- **Case studies:** a library of case studies to prove that your business has what it takes to do the job and provide examples of previous work. Case studies are best completed at the end of the job when it is fresh in everyone's mind, then placed in the tender repository. Case studies are not only useful for tenders but can be used in other areas of the business such as posted on the company website, used on company blogs etc.

A good case study should have a common structure consisting of:

- Client name, main contact name, email address and telephone no, title of work completed, date job started, date job finished, value.
- Brief description of work completed and why it was commissioned.
- How you approached the work and how you serviced the contract.
- Added value elements that you included.
- **Financial information:** containing scanned copies of the previous three years' accounts, insurance documentation etc.
- **Previous tender documents:** containing an electronic copy of all previous tenders submitted, to be used as reference.

Set up a Bid Team

You need to understand the key roles required in a bid team and identify those within your business who are best placed to fill each role. The key responsibilities within these roles should be discussed with the individuals and may need to be incorporated into their job descriptions. This may also identify any training that may be required.

Further information regarding the roles of the bid team can be found within the Bid Planning section of this guide.

Establish and Maintain a Tender Awareness System

Having decided to seek tender opportunities, you should establish a system to inform and alert the bid team whenever relevant opportunities arise.

Within the **private sector** there are no formal, consistent regulations in place regarding the advertising of contracts. Historically tenders were only issued to a small group of suppliers already known to the organisation. However, the private sector is increasingly seeking better value for money and innovative solutions and as such is now advertising tenders more widely.

Commonly, in the private sector, tender opportunities can be sourced by:

- Checking for advertisements in local and national newspapers.
- Checking for advertisements in trade or professional magazines.
- Contacting organisations directly.

In the **public sector**, however, standard procedures exist regarding the publication of tender opportunities.

- All tender notices over £30,000 are published in the local press and relevant trade journals and on the tendering organisation's website. Notices will also be publicised on specialist tendering directory websites.
- If the value of the contract is over £156,000 the tender is required to be advertised across the EU and as such an advertisement must be placed in the OJEU.

For further information regarding useful tendering websites, see Appendix B.

Alert Emails

Many of the internet sites advertising contracts offer a daily email alert system of new published contracts, often for free. To sign up to these you have to go through a short registration process which will require you to input keywords or select the Common Procurement Vocabulary (CPV) codes relating to the nature of the contracts you are interested in.

Once registered, you will be emailed when any new tender is published which references your keywords or is categorised by the relevant CPV code. The email will contain a short description of the tender.

Tendertap is a tender alert service hosted by the Enterprise Europe NI Team in Invest NI. As well as sending weekly alerts, the system also provides market analysis tools to identify market trends and future opportunities, locate new customers, and identify and monitor competitors. It also includes a translation tool.

Further information can be found at: www.enterpriseeuropeni.com



Appendix A: BUILD to Win guide

The Invest NI BUILD to Win guide has been developed to support businesses to adopt a professional and competitive approach to tendering.

It provides a framework of questions which businesses should be asking themselves so that they can self-assess as to whether they are ready and select the contracts that are best suited to the strengths of the organisation. For organisations new to tendering, the process will help to identify gaps and areas for improvement.

The key elements of the BUILD approach are as follows:

- **B - Believe:** Understanding EXISTING business capabilities.

Using various analysis tools, the business should 'have a look at itself' to identify core strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities and to perform an operational assessment of the business in order to fully understand their existing business capabilities and identify ways forward.

Potential tools - SWOT analysis template, Porter's Value Chain template and action register

- **U - Understand:** Understanding where the business is positioned within the wider market.

Using the PESTEL analysis this will help businesses to examine where they fit in relation to the best practice requirements of their industry and potential client base.

Potential tools - PESTEL analysis template and action register

- **I - Investigate:** This provides businesses with background information and a number of high level questions which will help them make an informed assessment as to which type of tenders are best suited to the organisation.
- **L - Leverage:** Developing a negotiating strategy that uses the business's strengths to maximise the contract potential both to the business and to the Buyer.
- **D - Deliver:** Measuring internal performance against the contract delivery in order to learn.

Having undertaken the above process, businesses should have a better understanding of what is required to be successful, know their business strengths and weaknesses and have a realistic view of whether tendering is a strategy for them. When progressing to the next stages in the tendering process, the tools used by the BUILD to Win process will be used to help develop the best bid for each tender opportunity.

A copy for the BUILD to Win Guide can be obtained from:

The Trade Team
Invest NI
Bedford Square
Belfast
BT2 7ES

Tel: 028 9069 8109 or 028 9069 8132
or www.investni.com





Appendix B: Useful tendering websites

Please note that further advice on the use of the following tendering websites is available from the Invest NI tendering support team.

Northern Ireland Public Sector Tender Opportunities

Within the Northern Ireland public sector, the organisation responsible for public sector procurement is the Central Procurement Directorate. They are directly responsible for all central government purchasing and for directing policy within the other NI Procurement Centres of Excellence.

Central Procurement Directorate - www.cpdni.gov.uk

Procurement Centres of Excellence

Current tenders can be found on each Centre's individual websites.

- Education & Library Boards - e.g. www.belb.org.uk
- NI Water - www.niwater.com
- Road Service - www.roadsni.gov.uk
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive - www.nihe.gov.uk
- Translink - www.translink.co.uk
- Individual local councils - e.g. www.belfastcity.gov.uk

- HSC Business Services Organisation (NI Health and Social Care sector) - www.hscbusiness.hscni.net

All the above websites and those of the other Northern Ireland procurement centres are free of charge but need to be searched individually.

A single procurement portal has now been developed by the Central Procurement Directorate for all Northern Ireland public sector tenders, with many of the Centres of Excellence advertising their contract opportunities within this central site. However, not all are participating yet. Once registered, this central portal provides the facility to register interest in a particular opportunity, to download all relevant documentation and forms and to submit the tender information electronically.

This central NI tender portal can be found at: <http://e-sourcingni.bravosolution.co.uk>

Please note that in order to respond to tenders issued by the Central Procurement Directorate, you must register as a supplier with them.

Republic of Ireland Public Sector Tender Opportunities

The central procurement portal for Irish public sector tender opportunities is:

www.e-tenders.gov.ie

Other relevant sites:

- All Ireland public and private construction tenders - www.tendersireland.com
- Forum on Public Procurement - www.fpp.ie
- Irish Public Sector Procurement Portal - www.procurement.ie

GB Public Sector Tender Opportunities

- Contracts Finder - www.contractsfinder.businesslink.gov.uk (free, email alerts available)
- Supply Contracts - www.supplycontracts.co.uk (free, email alerts in local area)

This website supports the government's Supply National SME Engagement programme to provide start-ups and small businesses with access to lower-value contract opportunities and resources to encourage greater participation in public sector procurement.

- Government procurement information site - www.govopps.co.uk
- UK online database of all available contracts and frameworks - www.contractsfinder.businesslink.gov.uk
- NHS healthcare opportunities - www.supply2health.nhs.uk

Scottish Public Sector Tender Opportunities

The central procurement portal for Scottish Public Sector tender opportunities is:

www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk
(free, alerts available)

Welsh Public Sector Tender Opportunities

The central procurement portal for Welsh Public Sector tender opportunities is:

www.buy4wales.co.uk
(free, alerts available)

A separate website is also available for suppliers to register to promote their businesses to the public sector in Wales - www.sell2wales.co.uk

EU Public Sector Tender Opportunities

Tenders Electronic Daily (TED) is the website providing online access to all OJEU advertised tenders - www.ted.europa.eu
TED is the on-line version of OJEC - the Official Journal of the European Union dedicated to European public procurement.

Other Relevant Sites

- Link to all public procurement databases across Europe - www.simap.europa.eu/supplier/national-procurement-databases
- E-Procurement Europe, information about European public procurement - www.simap.europa.eu

Global Sporting Tender Opportunities

- **London Olympics 2012** and other major projects

Tender opportunities associated with the London 2012 Olympics and can be accessed either through the main London 2012 website www.london2012.com/get-involved/business-network or through CompeteFor - www.competefor.com

CompeteFor is a free web portal enabling businesses to compete for contract opportunities linked to the London 2012 Games and other major public and private sector buying organisations, such as **Transport for London (TfL)**, **Crossrail** and the **Metropolitan Police**. Used by LOCOG (The Olympic Organising Committee) the website has been designed to open up the London 2012 supply chain and give SMEs a greater chance to benefit from the Games. The site 'introduces' businesses to contractors by allowing suppliers to register for the type of contracts they are interested in and to supply basic information about their services and products online. CompeteFor then notifies potential registered or 'published' suppliers of new contract opportunities which have been placed on the system relevant to them.

- **Commonwealth Games** - Glasgow 2014

The tendering website for the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow 2014 is provided by the Glasgow Business Portal - www.glasgow.gov.uk/businessportal

Free alert service is provided for companies who register.

- **Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics opportunities in Russia**
www.sochi2014.com/en
- **World Cup - Russia 2018**
www.fifa.com/worldcup/russia2018
- **Sport England**
www.sportengland.org/about_us/tenders_and_contracts
- **Major Global Sporting events websites**
www.sportcal.com - global sports marketing website detailing all up and coming major sporting events across the world. Subscription required for access to full calendar detail.
<http://britishbusinessclubinnovateuk.org> - free site listing major global events and offering an opportunity to identify partners.

Other Specialist Sectoral Tendering Portals

- **Bluelight** - www.bluelight.gov.uk
- tendering solutions for all emergency services
- **Cirrus tenders**
- www.cirruspurchasing.co.uk
- housing sector opportunities
- **Construction related services**
- www.constructionline.co.uk
- **Ministry of Defence contracts**
- www.contracts.mod.uk

Subscription Tendering Sites

- All UK & Ireland tenders - www.tendersdirect.co.uk (subscription site - £750 pa)
- All Ireland Public Sector tenders - www.tendersireland.com (subscription site - £250-£350 pa)
- Global tenders - www.tendermatch.co.uk (subscription site - £1480 pa)

Invest NI Tendering Support Team
Contact details:

Business Information Centre

Tel: (0)28 9069 8135

E: bic@investni.com

Prequalification Systems

- Achilles - www.achilles.com/Pre-Qualification (subscription site - depends on many business categories you select:
 - Tier 1 - 7 business categories
- £515 pa
 - Tier 2 - 14 business categories
- £640 pa
 - Tier 3 - 21 business categories
- £815 pa
 - Tier 4 - 21+ business categories
- £1015 pa
- Constructionline
- www.constructionline.co.uk
(subscription site - fee based on turnover per year)