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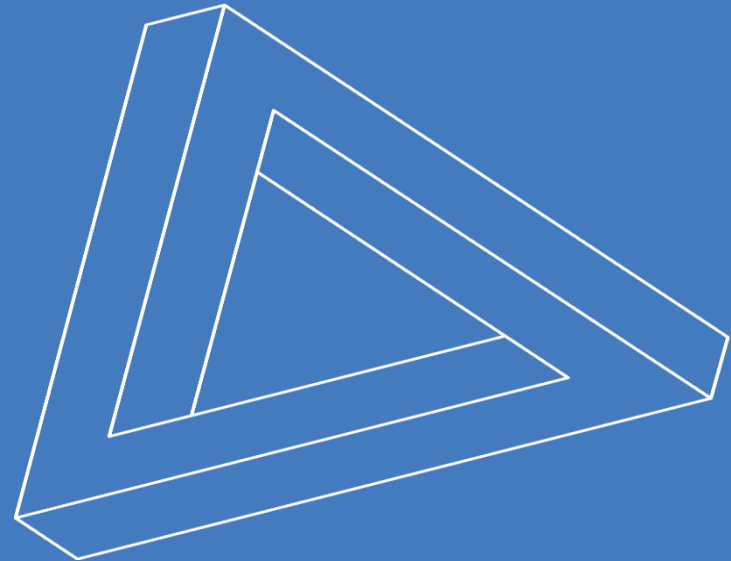
# Government Contracts 101 and Public Procurement Review Service





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# Government Contracts 101





## Common Myths

*MYTH: "Government is only looking to contract with large organisations or strategic suppliers"*

**FACT:** Each department has at least one small business Champion who is responsible for driving forward the agenda in their department and more and more departments are engaging with the VCSE sector. We want to tackle barriers which is why we are talking to you today!

*MYTH: "Government does not have any plans on how they are going to diversify their supply chains"*

**FACT:** Every department is required to publish an Action Plan that clearly states how it intends to work closer with small businesses.

*MYTH: "Government only cares about price"*

**FACT:** Government departments now need to take into account Social Value (including working with VCSEs) in their evaluation criteria of complex contracts.

For more information please go to the SME Hub on GOV.UK. Just search 'SME Hub' on any search engine.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/small-and-medium-business-hub>



# TIP 1 - FINDING OPPORTUNITIES

- **Contracts Finder** is the government's single online portal on which contracts valued above £10,000 in central government and above £25,000 in the rest of the non-devolved public sector are listed.
- It includes notices from non-devolved administrations and functions (mainly England).
- It's free to use to find opportunities: [www.gov.uk/contracts-finder](http://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder).
- You don't have to register, but if you do, you can set up an account to have new opportunities that suit your organisation emailed to you on a regular basis.
- **Find a Tender Service (FTS)** is the UK's replacement for the EU's TED.
- **FTS** includes notices from the entire UK for contracts above £130,000.
- It's free to use to find opportunities at <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/>

The screenshot shows the GOV.UK Contracts Finder search page. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the GOV.UK logo and 'Contracts Finder' text. Below that, a search bar is visible. The main content area is titled 'Find a contract' and includes a sub-header 'Explore and search business opportunities'. There are sections for 'Keywords' with a search input field and a link to 'How can I do an advanced search?'. The 'Contract location' section has radio buttons for 'All locations', 'Region', and 'Postcode'. The 'Notice type' section has checkboxes for 'Opportunity', 'Future opportunity', and 'Early engagement'. At the bottom of the search area are 'Search' and 'Reset' buttons. On the right side, there are several informational links and notices, including one about 'Public Procurement Review Service' and another about 'Contract information posted prior to 26 February 2015'.



## TIP 2 - CHECK PROCUREMENT PIPELINES

- Central departments and some arms length bodies publish a pipeline of programmes and procurements they plan to undertake in the next 2 years- these are on gov.uk.
- For example; MHCLG's [pipeline](#) captures £2bn of opportunities to end of 2022.
- Some departments start their pipelines at £10m, but others capture lower value contracts.
- Pipelines can be useful to plan ahead and start engaging with potential partners, or prime contractors who would be planning to bid for the work.
- A comprehensive [pipeline](#) of infrastructure projects across the entire public sector was published in June 2020 by the IPA- it covers £37bn of opportunity.



## TIP 3 - JOIN A SUPPLY-CHAIN

- A good way of getting experience for working with public sector is to join a supply chain and contracting with a prime contractor.
- You can do this by searching Contracts Finder for contracts that have been awarded to prime contractors and approach them with an offer to work with them.
- For example, prime contractors such as Reed and Ingeus have contracts with DWP to provide Employability services but often sub-contract services to local organisations.
- Working with large suppliers is often a great way to build up experience of working directly with government and will provide evidence of past performance for future bidding.
- Many industry bodies and trade associations also advertise opportunities in supply-chains so if you are a member keep an eye out for opportunities.
- Lots of organisations post information on how to engage with them on LinkedIn.





## TIP 4 - JOIN A FRAMEWORK OR DPS

- You can compete to join a government ‘framework’ or ‘dynamic purchasing system (DPS)’ specific to your goods and services such as health services, leisure service and apprenticeships.
- If successful you become a preferred contractor, you will be eligible to compete for further competitions and contracting authorities can sometimes opt to Direct Award.
- Unlike Frameworks, which have a fixed period, you may join a DPS (Dynamic Purchasing System) at any time and contract opportunities will be competed amongst all eligible businesses who are part of the DPS.
- The Crown Commercial Service manages a number of commercial deals for government and you can see their future plans for new ones at [www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/agreements/upcoming](http://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/agreements/upcoming).



## TIP 5 - CONSIDER ESTABLISHING A CONSORTIUM

- Bidding for opportunities as a **consortium** can be a good way for smaller or more specialist organisations to win public sector contracts.
- Consortium bids are welcome and any consortia does not need to be legally established until after contract award.
- Organisations are recommended to make links and research opportunities in their marketplace and identify how wider experience and skills can complement their own.
- Different Consortium models will be suitable in different circumstances- do research and take advise on different strategies.
- Consortia guidance will be released shortly- accompanied by webinars later in the year.







## TIP 6 - ENGAGE WITH DEPARTMENTS WHERE YOU CAN

- Many departments and buying organisations host regular “Meet the Buyer” events and market engagement sessions- these are a good way to find out more about the customer requirements.
- Finding out what is important to the buying organisation e.g. core values, key objectives, the type of solution they are looking for – departments publish a lot of information so gov.uk can be used to research.
- All previous procurements are published on contracts finder- you can check for other previous awards, contracts and even prices on here.
- Local Authorities often look at contracting with local suppliers to drive growth in their communities- they regularly publish upcoming events and sessions through LEP network.





## TIP 7 - WRITE YOUR BID CAREFULLY

- Public Sector procurement is regulated and tenders need to be assessed in accordance with clear evaluation guidelines - this can make it more complex. Check submissions carefully to ensure all documents have been submitted.
- Ask questions if the information in the tender is unclear - there will be an established a process for responding to questions raised during the procurement process.
- Use plain English in your response by keeping sentences short and avoiding jargon and complex technical language that buyers/evaluators may not understand.
- If you are concerned that there is a barrier in the procurement which would exclude you- Public Procurement Review Service (who are shortly going to present) can address this!





## TIP 8 - ASK FOR FEEDBACK

- Procurement teams should provide feedback if your bid is unsuccessful, if they do not- you should request feedback.
- You can compare your bid and price submitted with information about the winning bid when it is published on contracts finder.
- Procurement teams are often keen to speak with suppliers- especially VCSEs and SMEs, therefore you can ask for a lessons learned meeting with the team or general advice through procurement teams.





# Get in Touch

If you think we can help or want to know more, get in touch:

- Email: [smallbusinessteam@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:smallbusinessteam@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)
- Twitter: [@cabinetofficeuk](https://twitter.com/cabinetofficeuk)
- LinkedIn: Follow Government Commercial Function
- Search: ‘Small and Medium Business Hub’ on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

## Guidance

### Small and Medium Business Hub

Centralised guidance for SMEs and departments on government’s commitment to support start-ups and small businesses via government procurement, and commit to paying them on time.

Published 28 September 2020

From: [Cabinet Office](#)

#### Contents

- [Overview](#)
- [How are we supporting the commitment?](#)
- [How are the central departments supporting SMEs?](#)
- [How do we measure success?](#)
- [Helpful Links](#)
- [Social Media](#)
- [Contact us](#)



## Overview

Government has a commitment to obtain value for money and support small businesses and start-ups through procurement. We understand the challenges and barriers, especially for smaller firms, and are committed to tackling them. We want to tackle obstacles that they face when supplying or

### Brexit

[Check how the new Brexit rules affect you](#)

#### Related content

[Cabinet Office Small Business Advisory Panel](#)

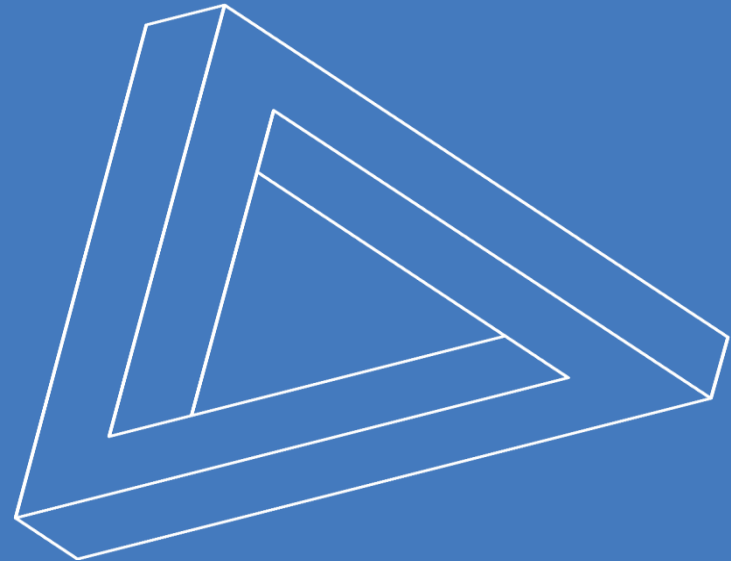
[MoJ procurement: case studies](#)

[Small and Medium Enterprise Action Plan](#)



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# Public Procurement Review Service





## Public Procurement Review Service

The Public Procurement Review Service is one of a range of measures designed to make government easier to work with, helping suppliers (particularly Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and Voluntary Community and Social Enterprises (VCSEs)), levelling the playing field for those who want to supply to government.

The service is free and available for any supplier to use where they feel they might have been treated unfairly during a bid, or that they have concerns about the conduct of a procurement process.

The work of PPRS can lead to live procurements being adjusted, or recommendations being made to Contracting Authorities, leading to improvements in the way government sources goods and services in the future.

PPRS also handles cases concerning the late payment of valid and undisputed invoices on a public sector contract (i.e. not paid within 30 calendar days or any earlier payment date as stated in the contract terms).

The service operates Monday to Friday during normal business hours.



# Our Process



## [Public Procurement Review Service Brochure](#)

PDF, 6MB, 15 pages

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.

▶ [Request an accessible format.](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-procurement-review-service-scope-and-remit>





## Working With Us

PPRS can in principle investigate any contracting authority. In particular the service covers: central government, its agencies, non departmental public bodies, the wider public sector, local authorities and NHS bodies.

We cannot investigate:

- an authority that wholly or mainly exercises functions which are Scottish, Welsh or Northern Ireland devolved functions.
- cases concerning academies and maintained schools,
- exercise of functions relating to the procurement of health care services for the purpose of the NHS.

We aim to complete our action within two months of receipt if the referral concerns a central government body, or within three months of receipt for issues relating to the wider public sector. If your case is more complex, we may require longer to get a good resolution.

When we receive a case, we will contact the contracting authority to explain our role, make them aware of the issue and establish a timeline for resolution. We will not share the suppliers details unless they are happy for us to do so.

Where a procurement is live, we will actively work with the contracting authority to reach a resolution before the tender submission deadline, or (where appropriate) request a deadline extension to allow for further clarification.





## Key service statistics

- Over 1,800 referrals since 2011;
- PPRS helped suppliers reclaim over £8 million from over 350 late payment cases reported to the service and had a 100% success rate of releasing payments on undisputed invoices.
- In our last reporting year 2019/20, 100% of cases have resulted in a positive outcome - this includes:
  - PPRS recommendations being accepted;
  - Areas identified to improve future procurement practice;
  - Cases where the complaint was not upheld and PPRS was able to offer advice to the supplier to help them understand what has happened and why.
- Our ongoing Spot Check work supports the continued commitment to transparency across government.



## Get in Touch

*"The service plays a really valuable role in identifying issues in public sector procurement faced by small businesses. I'm committed to seeing barriers lowered so more small companies bid for contracts so the feedback we get helps us do that.*

*I urge all businesses to use the service if they see something that doesn't seem right or that they don't understand"*

**Martin Traynor OBE, Small Business Crown Representative**

If you think we can help or want to know more, get in touch or follow us:

- Email: [publicprocurementreview@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:publicprocurementreview@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)
- Call: 0345 010 3503
- Twitter: [@govpprs](https://twitter.com/govpprs)
- Support us by using: #PPRS
- Search: 'Public Procurement Review Service' on GOV.UK