

Doing business with the Council



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Introduction

Allerdale Borough Council spends approximately £17.5 million with external suppliers every year providing a wide range of commercial opportunities.

This guide has been produced to explain how to go about trading with the Council. It sets out policies and procedures the Council has to follow, how to find out about business opportunities, what the Council is looking for, processes that suppliers have to follow and useful contact details.

This guide is intended to enable you to feel confident in approaching the Council for business and to enable you to maximise your opportunity to obtain business from the Council.

The Council buys goods, work and services from a range of suppliers. Contracts vary from small one-off purchases to large contracts to provide services on behalf of the Council. Generally each individual department has direct responsibility for their purchasing activity, with the exception of a few areas where spend is organised centrally e.g. IT services and products, stationery, furniture, catering and car hire.

For more information contact the Corporate Procurement Team by telephone on 01900 702960 or email procurement@allerdale.gov.uk.

Policies and Procedures

The Councils Procurement and Contract arrangements aim to ensure that the Council achieves value for money from the money it spends. It also ensures fair and transparent procedures and equal treatment of all potential suppliers. All Council officers must follow procedures set out by the Councils Financial Regulations and relevant UK and EU law. How much is being spent depends on which procedures officers must follow. These are set out below;

£0 - £1,000

These purchases are classed as low value. The officer making the purchase must be satisfied that they are getting value for money.

£1,000 - £10,000

These purchases are made by individual officers (budget holders) who must be satisfied that they are getting value for money. They must obtain a minimum of four quotations which they can get either verbally or from published prices i.e. catalogue, website. The award of the contract or purchase can be made by the relevant Service Manager.

£10,000 - £25,000

A minimum of four written bids must be obtained by the officer making the purchase. Dependent upon the nature of the purchase officers usually send out a written specification to suppliers whom they approach from the market place. Suppliers then return written bids to the Council which are then evaluated. The award of the procurement can be made by the Head of Service.

£25,000 - £75,000

A minimum of four written bids must be obtained by the officer making the purchase. Organisations are invited to tender and are usually sent a written specification providing detailed information about the intended purchase. The award of the procurement is made but the relevant Director and a contract is required.

£75,000 - £125,000

A minimum of four written bids must be obtained by the officer making the purchase. Organisations are invited to tender and are usually sent a written specification providing detailed information about the intended purchase. The award of the procurement is made by the relevant Director or Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Members and a contract is required.

£125,000 +

A minimum of four written bids must be obtained by the officer making the purchase. Organisations are invited to tender and are sent a written specification providing detailed information about the intended purchase. A contract is required the award of the procurement is made by the Executive Committee after the consideration of a report explaining the evaluation of the proposals.

EU LAW

Any procurement which is expected to have a total contract value of £139,893 (goods and services) and £3,497,313 (works) must be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) and follow the procedures it sets out. OJEU stipulates timescales that must be observed as well as rules which promote non-discriminatory and transparent competition.

Business Opportunities

APPROVED LISTS

The Council does not keep approved supplier lists for any of its purchases or contracts but does have contracts and agreements in place with various suppliers for some types of purchases. These suppliers have been subject to selection and award procedures.

Constructionline

Constructionline is the preferred method of selecting firms to be invited to tender for works contracts. This is the UK's largest register of pre-qualified construction services owned and endorsed by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Over 12,500 contractors and consultants, ranging from sole traders and small specialist firms to large multi-nationals, are registered with Constructionline and have all met strict pre-qualification requirements. For more information;

visit www.constructionline.co.uk/
email constructionline@capita.co.uk
telephone 0870 240 0152.

EPiC

Allerdale Borough Council is part of a new shared service for purchasing commodity goods and services that has been set up across Cumbria. The authorities involved include; Allerdale, Barrow, Carlisle, Copeland, South Lakeland, LDNPA and Cumbria County Council. The service, entitled **Effective Procurement in Cumbria (EPiC)**, will change the way the Council purchases some types of goods and services. Its purpose is to secure efficiency savings across the goods and services we buy. Suppliers and their products and services will be accessed through online catalogues available to all authorities in EPiC visible through the new electronic purchasing system called IDeA Marketplace.

For more information contact the Corporate Procurement Team by telephone on 01900 702960 or email procurement@allerdale.gov.uk.

ePROCUREMENT

IDeA Marketplace

Allerdale Borough Council is implementing an electronic purchase ordering system called IDeA Marketplace. Suppliers are registered by the Council on the system and will receive our purchase orders by email or automated fax. There is no cost to the supplier for being registered on the system or to provide an electronic catalogue of their goods and services.

For more information visit <http://www.allerdale.gov.uk/business/doing-business-with-us.aspx>

CONTRACT OPPORTUNITIES

Contracts Register

The Council publishes a 'Contracts Register' detailing information on its existing contracts with a value of £50,000 or more.

Advertisements

The Council, where appropriate, will endeavour to advertise contract opportunities in the local media. A tenders and contracts page can now be found on the Council's website allerdale.gov.uk with details of new business opportunities. We will post lower-value tenders (typically under £125,000) on the government-backed portal Supply2.gov.uk. Where appropriate we will advertise contract opportunities in national newspapers, the Council's own website and also relevant trade press. Notices will describe the nature of the procurement, date to respond to advert, return address and contact details of the appropriate officer.

Contracts over £139,893

Contracts with a total value over £139,893 are advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). This is usually followed by an advertisement in the UK media. Certain 'types' of contracts are excluded from being advertised in OJEU; where this is the case the Council will still advertise within the UK.

OJEU contracts and information can be viewed at <http://simap.eu.int/>

Tendering

TENDER PROCESS

Officers will invite tender proposals using either an open or a restricted tender process.

Open: All suppliers can respond to an advertisement or an invite from the Council and will be supplied with all tender documentation. The tender proposals made by the supplier must be returned in accordance with the instructions in the tender. Bids will then be short listed and suppliers invited to give a presentation to the Council.

Restricted: This is a two-stage process. All suppliers can respond to an advertisement or an invite from the Council and will be supplied with a pre-qualification questionnaire to complete. If suppliers meet the requirements set out in the questionnaire they are short listed and invited to submit a formal tender proposal.

TENDER OPENING

Tender proposals are returned to the Council's Democratic Services Department who hold them until they are due to be opened. Tender proposals are all opened at the same time. For purchases over £75,000 tender proposals are opened in the presence of the Chief Executive and the relevant Executive Member or nominated representatives.

CHECKING THE TENDERS

All bids are scrutinized to ensure they have been properly completed and submitted in accordance with the tender documents and instructions. If a supplier has made an error or defect the Council makes an assessment to see if giving the supplier the opportunity to correct the defect would give them an unfair advantage or compromise the integrity of the competitive process. If not, they are informed of the error and given the opportunity to correct it. In all other circumstances they will be informed of the error and offered the option of withdrawing it or standing by it.

TENDER EVALUATION

The bids are then evaluated on a common basis which clearly demonstrates the merits of each proposal in terms of both cost effectiveness and in meeting the Councils specified requirements. This will normally be done by a panel of officers. The evaluation criteria is usually set out in the written specification sent to the tenderer. Tenders may be short listed and invited to give a presentation or attend an interview as part of their tender proposals.

TENDER AWARD

Successful tenderers will be notified in writing and we will always endeavour to give feedback to unsuccessful tenderers within the limits of commercial confidentiality. Any requests for debriefing are to be made in writing.

An official order form including a purchase order number is required for all purchases and a signed written contract is needed for all procurements over £25,000.

What the Council looks for



The Council will, at any stage of the tendering process, request information so we can assess the potential bidders suitability to supply the Council and satisfy the requirements of the contract. Spending tax payers money we need to be sure the companies we deal with are legitimate, discrete trading organisations, have acceptable levels of economic and financial standing, offer value for money and promote good practices in the areas of; health and safety, environmental protection, quality, diversity and equal opportunities, to name a few.

Proposals will be evaluated on a common basis and the method of evaluation shall be determined in advance and notified to potential suppliers. The Council is not obliged to accept the lowest priced or in fact any proposal, however, the award shall primarily be evaluated on the basis of best value for money which includes a robust assessment of cost and quality. Other relevant award criteria may also be included, i.e. compliance with the specification, previous experience, delivery, relevant environmental considerations, relevant health and safety issues, how the supplier contributes to the community plan, approach to risk management plus any other relevant criteria.

Alignment around our vision and values

The councils seeks suppliers which are aligned with our vision and values.

Our vision is “a great place to live, work and visit”.

Allerdale also has set of **values**, adopted by every member of our staff:

“Leading by example, valuing one another.....By working together, and taking pride in our achievements, we can create a better culture for everyone in Allerdale Borough Council and better serve our customers”.

For further information please see our website www.allerdale.gov.uk Click on ‘Council and Democracy’ and then ‘Allerdale’s Vision or’ ‘Allerdale’s Values’ in the contents list.

Quality

The Council expects suppliers to provide goods and services that are ‘fit for purpose’ and free from defects or problems. We will look to see how suppliers approach quality both within their organisation and in producing their goods and services. The Council will evaluate tenderers on this and look for quality standards required by law or manufacturers recommended standards where appropriate.

Health and Safety

The Council expects its suppliers to have appropriate measures in place to manage their Health and Safety. When evaluating tenders the Council will look at organisations approach to Health and Safety both within the company and in respect of the product or service they are selling. The Council may also request a copy of tenderers Health and Safety policy and details of how Health and Safety issues are managed.

Environmental

All businesses make an environmental footprint on the world in some way or other; it is therefore Allerdale Borough Councils goal to work with suppliers and the supply chain to minimise our negative environmental impact. The Council supports sustainable, environmentally friendly practices and expects suppliers to take into account the environmental impact of their products and services at all stages of their lifecycle. The Council, when evaluating its tenders, will consider what action suppliers take to follow environmentally sustainable practices.

Legislation

The Council is aware of its responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 1998, Human Rights Act 1998, Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Race Relations Act 1996, Sex Discrimination Act 1975, The Competition Act 1998 and the Enterprise Act 2000. The Council expects suppliers to be aware of and comply with their duties and may ask for supplier's policies or position on issues such as diversity, equal opportunities, etc as part of the tendering process, for more information visit www.of.gov.uk/Business

References

The Council may request to see details of referees. Suppliers will be expected to provide these details which the Council may follow up before a contract is awarded.

Contracts

The Council requires all procurements with a total value over £25,000 to have a written contract in place or contract under seal where the Borough Solicitor so decides. All contract terms and conditions must be finalised before the supply, service or works begin and the Council requires specific clauses to be included in its agreements with suppliers.

The Council's Terms and Conditions are available at;

<http://www.allerdale.gov.uk/business/doing-business-with-us/terms--conditions.aspx>

Supporting Local Area

Where appropriate the Council supports and encourages local suppliers to compete for Council work. In a recent analysis of expenditure carried out by the Council, figures revealed that approximately 45% of our expenditure is spent locally (suppliers using invoice address within Allerdale). Taking all Cumbrian local authorities expenditure data, we found that 53% of spend was with organisations having invoice addresses within Cumbria.

Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) came into force in January 2005 and under it any member of the public, company, charity or organisation, may make a request for information to Allerdale Borough Council. A request can be made for any recorded information which is held by the authority or by persons providing services for us, and that information must be provided **unless** it is covered by one of the Acts 23 exemptions.

Guide

A guide has been published on the Councils website for Procurement Related Freedom of Information Requests. Go to www.allerdale.gov.uk click on 'Business' then click on 'Doing Business with us' then 'Procurement FOI Requests'.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 is enforceable by the Information Commissioner, for further information please visit www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk.

For any queries on Freedom of Information, please contact:

Telephone 01900 702701

email foi@allerdale.gov.uk

Contact

For any queries on any aspect of this guide, please contact:

Corporate Procurement Team

Telephone 01900 702960

email procurement@alldale.gov.uk

Write Allerdale Borough Council, Allerdale House, Workington, Cumbria, CA14 3YJ

We can produce this document in large print format, on audio tape and in other languages if you ask us. If you would like a copy in one of these formats please contact the Corporate Procurement Team.