



## **How to do Business with Southwark Council**

### **About this guide**

This guide is to help organisations understand how to do business with Southwark Council and compete for council contracts. It has been designed to give organisations an insight into our tender procedures for works, supplies and services.

There is often a great deal of competition for Southwark Council contracts and this guide cannot guarantee you will be successful in being awarded a contract. However, it should provide sufficient information to help you to understand the requirements on 'how to do business with the council'.

### **About Southwark Council**

Southwark Council's priorities are guided by the council's Council Plan. This sets out the council's commitments which will help achieve its vision of a fairer future for all across eight themes:

- A place to call home
- A place to belong
- A greener borough
- A full employment borough
- A healthier life
- A great start in life
- A safer community
- A vibrant Southwark

Southwark Council spends over £450million per annum providing a wide range of works, supplies and services including construction, design, print, office supplies, utilities, facilities management, waste management, and social care.

Southwark is home to approximately 13,000 businesses with the majority classified as small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Around half of the business base operates within the finance and business service sector which includes business to business services such as; accounting activities, market research, design and print and cleaning.

Wherever possible, the council encourages its suppliers to consider the use of local subcontractors in their supply chains.

### **Procurement overview**

Southwark Council wants to secure value for money in all its procurement activities. Our procurement processes are carried out in accordance with council and European Union (EU) regulations and in non-discriminatory ways that are fair and transparent and treat all organisations equally.

Like any organisation the council seeks to secure value for money in all its procurement activities. However as a public organisation, it is bound by certain rules and regulations regarding the award of contracts. These requirements are to ensure that its procurement activity is carried out in a non-discriminatory, fair and transparent manner.

The council has a recognised procurement process that is followed by all departments, which ensures compliance with the principles of best value, probity and transparency in the purchase of works, supplies and services as well as trying to achieve an environment in which all organisations in any given market must follow the same rules and are given an equal ability to compete in fair competition, where no advantage is shown to either side.

Each department carries out most of its own procurement processes according to its individual needs. Before a department embarks on any procurement it will first identify a need, considers which procurement options and routes are available as well as ascertaining the estimated value of the contract. It is primarily the value of the contract which dictates the procurement process that the council will need to follow.

### **Procurement Rules and Regulations**

Southwark Council is required to follow the procedures laid down in legislation as well as our own financial and procurement regulations. These are designed to ensure that all our purchases are carried out in a fair and transparent manner.

### **National Rules and Regulations**

Our procurement activity must also comply with the Public Contract Regulations and we must follow the rules and regulations set out in this legislation. These rules depend on the value of the contract and the type of contract (see table below). The Local Government Act 1999 also placed a duty on all councils to achieve 'best value' from their procurement activities.

### **Council Rules and Regulations**

The council has its own set of rules and regulations which should be followed. These are known as Contract Standing Orders (CSOs). Whilst this is used by staff to assist them with procurement activity, it is a publically available document and can be viewed on the council's website at [www.southwark.gov.uk](http://www.southwark.gov.uk)

Southwark's procurement procedures are designed to ensure we achieve best value and continued improvement in everything the council purchases. The contract value determines whether we need to seek quotations or tenders and the process we must follow.

£0 - £24,999	purchase order (no quotations required) in line with approved list for works, where relevant
£25,000 - £ 99,999	written quotations or a mini-tender exercise (3 quotations to be returned by a specified closing date and time) must be carried out to establish value for money
£100,000 – EU thresholds	advertised tender or approved list for works contracts (5 competitive tenders will be invited in accordance with the council's Contract Standing Orders and Procurement Guidelines, to be submitted by a specified closing date and time)

EU thresholds and above*	EU tender process (5 competitive tenders will be invited in accordance with the procedures laid down in the Public Contract Regulations)
--------------------------	--

\*EU thresholds are updated every two years and as at January 2018 are:

- £181,302 for services and supplies
- £615,278 for 'light touch regime' contracts (also known as Annex XIV contracts)
- £4,551,413 for construction works (please also see below on approved lists)

### **Works contracts**

Works contracts will follow the approved list process up to £4,551,413 at which point the tender process set out in the Public Contract Regulations must be followed.

### **e-Procurement – Procurement Portal**

The council has adopted an e-Procurement system that will offer efficiencies in advertising and for suppliers to respond to contract opportunities. Registration for contract opportunities via Southwark's e-Procurement Portal is free for suppliers and allows specific category information to be selected. Once registered, suppliers will receive an e-mail alert when any opportunity is posted to the site that matches your category, either from Southwark or any of the participating London Boroughs who use the same system:

<https://procontract.due-north.com/SupplierRegistration/Requirements>

All suppliers interested in doing business with the council will need to register with the portal in order to access and respond to opportunities. Please be aware that registration is not a guarantee of work.

### **How to find out about our contracts opportunities**

These are published in a number of places and are described below:

#### **Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU)**

Whilst the UK is a member of the European Union and where the value of the contract exceeds the EU thresholds, notices will be published in the Official Journal of the Union Journal (OJEU)

These notices are available in electronic form via the internet at [www.ted.europa.eu](http://www.ted.europa.eu) – these notices can be viewed free of charge.

[Official Journal of the European Union](http://www.ted.europa.eu) (for adverts of contracts above EU threshold values)

#### **Contracts Finder**

Contracts Finder lets you search for current contract opportunities worth over £10,000 with central government departments or over £25,000 for local government opportunities.

The website is <http://www.gov.uk/contractsfinder>

#### **Procurement Portal**

A list of all the contract opportunities being run through the council's e-Procurement system will be advertised electronically via this system. These are available at: <https://www.londontenders.org>

Details of the e-Procurement system and how to register are outlined in this document.

#### **Trade Journals, Local and National Press.**

Where the contract is valued at between £100,000 and the EU thresholds, we may also advertise our contracts in specialist trade or professional publications and journals and in appropriate circumstances we may also advertise contracts in relevant trade or professional journals, and the national or local press – for example Southwark News or the South London Press.

### **Approved Lists for works**

Approved lists are lists of contractors and suppliers vetted to the council's standards and technical capability, including financial, equality and health and safety assessments.

Southwark Council has an approved list which covers building contractors and consultants.

The council does not maintain an approved list covering supplies or services.

Building contractors and consultants on our approved list have been vetted to the council's standards and technical capability, having had financial, equality and health and safety assessments carried out.

This list is managed on our behalf by Exor Management Services and is used when we tender for construction contracts and consultants engagement, other than those contracts that fall within the European procurement regulations.

Exor are an independent accreditation body for suppliers and contractors to the public sector. The advantage of being on our approved list gives reassurances to the council that a minimum standard has been met, and saves firms from having to re-apply for contracts to meet that standard.

You should check with Exor Management Services to establish which work categories are available and of interest to you.

If you would like to apply to join the approved list please contact Exor Management Services directly. They will send you an application form and full details of the scheme including details of their subscription fees.

Their contact details are as

follows:- Exor (Services) Ltd  
Santia House  
Parc Nantgarw  
Cardiff  
CF15 7QX

Tel: 029 20 029 667

Mail: [customerservices@exorgroup.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@exorgroup.co.uk)

Web: [www.exorms.co.uk](http://www.exorms.co.uk)

### **How to apply to get onto the approved list of contractors and consultants**

If your organisation would like to apply for a place on the council's approved list, you are required to go through an application process to verify your suitability and competence which will be assessed in accordance with the size of your organisation.

The questionnaire will tell you what information is required and where it should be returned. Where necessary, you will be contacted for additional information. When all sections of your business questionnaire have been evaluated and approved, you will be added to the Exor database, and you will receive a letter from Exor to confirm this.

## **How the approved contractor list works**

Once you have been accredited by Exor, you must request that Exor add your company's details to Southwark's approved list for construction and consultancy related work and will be available online to staff in the council who let contracts for construction and related works. You must also register for free on the e-Procurement portal via: <https://www.londontenders.org> as contract opportunities may be issued to registered approved list providers via the portal.

Once selected from the approved list to tender for construction or consultancy work, you will be contacted and invited to tender.

Work categories are also assigned to each contractor on the list. A works category is a simple way of classifying the services you provide, for example, "electrical – air conditioning". This also makes it easy for council officers to search our database for contractors by using these works categories.

## **COMPLETING YOUR TENDER DOCUMENTATION**

### **Specification**

This is the document which we set out our needs are, what is to be achieved, outcomes expected and performance standards the successful tenderer is expected to meet.

### **Pricing document**

This is the document where all prices are entered.

### **Contract Terms and Conditions**

This document defines the relationship between the council and the supplier/contractor

### **Tender Evaluation Methodology**

This will tell you how we intend to evaluate your tender submission. We will ensure that the model we are using is clear and understandable.

### **Quality requirements/method statement questions**

These questions will ask how you intend to provide the supplies/service/works. These responses will then be used to evaluate the quality of your bid.

### **System queries**

If using the e-Procurement system, supplier help is available by emailing their support team on [ProContractSuppliers@proactis.com](mailto:ProContractSuppliers@proactis.com) An online help portal can be used to submit details via <http://proactis.kayako.com/default>. Please include as much detail as possible and label this as "Urgent" if it is time-sensitive and include your telephone contact information if you need a ring-back. The helpdesk is available directly on 01670 597136.

### **Other Information**

#### **Interviews/Presentations**

During the tender evaluation period you may be invited to give a presentation or attend an interview as part of your tender submission. If invited, you will be given information on the format of the day.

### **Feedback**

If you are not awarded a contract you will be notified in writing that you have been unsuccessful, and will be given the opportunity to ask for feedback. You should receive feedback at either stage of the evaluation process or you can request it by writing or e-mailing the council officer named in the documentation.

## **Contract Monitoring**

All organisations undertaking contracts let by the council are monitored to ensure compliance with the specification and terms and conditions of the contract. Explanations will be sought from organisations failing to meet the agreed levels of performance. Continuing poor performance may ultimately lead to early termination of the contract.

## **Helpful Tips**

If you are invited to tender please bear in mind the following to give yourself the best possible chance of success:

- Read and follow the instructions set out in the Invitation to Tender. Check that you have received all the documents stated in the Invitation to Tender.
- Review the evaluation criteria and guidance. This will help you focus on the important aspects of the contract
- If you do not understand any part of the documentation ask for clarification. Take the opportunity to raise queries as soon as possible and well before the time you have to submit your tender.
- Present your tender so that it is easy to read, concise and gives sufficient detail to allow a full objective evaluation. Ensure you have answered all the questions fully. Tailor your submission to suit the contract being tendered.
- Be prepared to present your proposals, or receive site visits from officers of the council
- Don't assume anything. The evaluation team may not know your organisation or have experience of your operation.
- If you are unsuccessful, ask for feedback

## **Procurement and Equalities**

Southwark Council is committed to achieving best practice in equalities and diversity and promoting equality through procurement. The means:

- Recognising that everyone is different and treating these differences with equal respect
- Valuing the diversity of people
- Delivering services openly and fairly, and in ways which suit our customers
- Investing in a skilled, stable and diverse workforce
- Challenging discrimination in all its forms

All groups in our communities have a right to expect that public money is spent on local services that meet their specific needs and that it is spent in a way which promotes equality of opportunity and complies with our equal opportunity policy, and the Equalities Act 2010.

The council aims to achieve a consistent approach to equality in the delivery of all our services. We also expect organisations working on our behalf to practise equal opportunities and comply with our equal opportunity policy.

## **Procurement and Sustainability**

Southwark Council is committed to improving its own environmental and sustainable performance through the use of best available materials, best practice and new technologies. The council also expects organisations working on our behalf to demonstrate similar levels of care and commitment.

## **Further Information**

### **Support for Local Businesses**

Southwark Council is committed to helping local businesses benefit from council procurement as well as the opportunities arising from major developments, as part of its overall objectives to support a vibrant local economy and create jobs for residents.

Promoting diverse and local supply chains helps businesses in Southwark to thrive and has the potential to secure community and economic regeneration through business and trade rather than relying on the public purse.

If your business is based within Southwark you can take advantage of a range of business support organisations and initiatives.

For the latest information, please visit our Business Portal at [www.southwark.gov.uk/business](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/business).

The Business Portal acts as the link between the council and the business community. You can access a wide range of information including support available for local businesses, the council's procurement processes, business rates, the Southwark Business Directory and much more.

**GOV.UK** Free, impartial advice services available to anyone starting or running a business. This site also offers advice to business on how to tender for contracts.

<https://www.gov.uk>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/crown-commercial-service>

**Social Enterprise UK** SEL offers advice to social enterprises on how to access private sector and public sector contracts. [www.sel.org.uk](http://www.sel.org.uk)

**Office of Fair Trading** Advice, guidance and support on trading and competition regulation. [www.offt.gov.uk](http://www.offt.gov.uk)

**London Tenders Portal:** <https://www.londontenders.org>

**Federation of Small Businesses** – Nationwide campaigning group that promotes and protects the interests of sole traders and small businesses. [www.fsb.org.uk](http://www.fsb.org.uk)

**Southwark Chamber of Commerce** [www.southwarkcommerce.com](http://www.southwarkcommerce.com)

**Community Action Southwark** [www.casouthwark.org.uk](http://www.casouthwark.org.uk)