

Bid better for Public Sector contracts

Sustainable energy supply chain
and procurement guidance



A practical guide for bidders bidding for public sector contracts in the energy efficiency and renewables marketplace in Scotland

About this guide

This is a practical guide to help suppliers, installers, assessors, and consultants to bid for public sector contracts in the energy efficiency and renewables marketplace. It comes at an exciting time, particularly given the fact that energy efficiency has now been designated as an infrastructure priority by the Scottish Government, and there is now more focus on renewables and energy efficiency. Consequently, there are expected to be more contract opportunities arising over the next few years, particularly through the Scottish Government's Energy Efficient Scotland programme.

The Scottish Government has developed several initiatives focusing on a wide range of schemes including targeting fuel poverty and helping develop and support the sustainable energy supply chain. This provides a framework and basis to procure and deliver energy efficiency projects and contracts across Scotland.

Energy Saving Trust commissioned procurement specialists SCMG to produce this guide in response to feedback received from installers, assessors, and other groups involved in the sustainable energy supply chains. Feedback revealed that paperwork and administration was a significant barrier and that more support was required in understanding public sector procurement and how to bid better.

This guide aims to address this feedback, and will help you:

- Learn about or brush up on key procurement topics.
- Challenge your overall approach to tendering using various exercises.
- Focus on key areas to improve a specific bid.

We have also developed a series of webinars to support this guide. These are available on the Energy Saving Trust website (see useful websites section at the end of the document in section 13) alongside other sources of information, advice, and support.

When you see the pencil, this is an exercise for you to complete. You could apply these exercises to your tendering approach in general or use for a specific bid you are working on.



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1.0 Introduction

The public procurement landscape in Scotland has been transformed over the last 10 years and a vibrant and dynamic marketplace now exists. This includes:

- Legislation and clearly defined rules about how the process should be managed – including the ability to challenge the outcome of a tender process if you think you have been unfairly treated or discriminated against.
- Objective criteria and guidance about how your bid will be evaluated and scored.
- Contracts published electronically and publicly available on the Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) online portal.

There is significant support available and access for bidders including 'meet the buyer' type events organised by public bodies and legislation and guidance to engage small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in public procurement.

Community Benefits and Fair Work Practices are now part and parcel of public tendering. These are designed to highlight and deliver benefits to the wider community where a contract is being delivered and to create a fair and equitable workplace at the heart of the Scottish economy.

Public sector tendering is something you can learn to do and improve with practice. If you are unsuccessful with a bid, it is not inconceivable that your competitors wrote a better bid than you. The trick is to stick at it, identify lessons learned from each bid and apply them to your next bid.

You will need to invest some time and effort.

This guide is designed to help bidders write better tenders. The content of this guide is designed to help you learn from each bid to improve your overall success rate and the amount of business you do in the energy efficiency and renewables marketplace.

Public sector tendering is something you can learn to do and improve with practice.

2.0

Glossary of terms

The following table explains some of the commonly used terms in public sector procurement used in this Guide.

Term	Description
Accelerated Procedure	An Open or Restricted procedure where urgency makes the normal timescales impractical.
Alert Profile	A PCS tool where bidders can set up and receive alerts for contract opportunities based on information contained in their profile.
Bidder	The organisation that is participating in a procurement process to win a contract to deliver works, services or goods.
Buyer	The organisation or public body that is coordinating a procurement process with a view to awarding a contract otherwise known as the Contracting Authority.
Contract Award Notice	Contract Award Notice or sometimes referred to as the CAN is published once the contract has been awarded.
Contract Notice	Contract Notice or the advert for the contract.
Community Benefits	Social, Economic and Environmental requirements and commitments from bidders to support the contract.
Competitive Dialogue	The procedure used for complex contracts where it is not possible to award a contract using the Open or Restricted procedures.
Competitive Procedure Negotiation	A procedure where bidders will respond to an invitation to tender with (or other call to competition), then selected bidders are invited to further negotiate elements of their bid. Following the negotiations, the bidders are invited to submit a final tender.
Dynamic Procurement System (DPS)	DPS is a two stage process for commonly procured goods and services. Stage 1 includes an SPD submission followed by a second stage where all suppliers on the DPS are invited to bid for specific tender opportunities.
SPD	Single Procurement Document is a qualification document used as part of the tender process. There is a version that can be downloaded as a document which is commonly used, completed, and uploaded to the PCS portal and an online version.
Fair Work Practices	A Scottish Government initiative to encourage fair work and for organisations to become best practice employers.
Innovation	A procedure aimed at encouraging the development of innovative products, services or works where a specification is too difficult for the buyer to develop or the requirement is not already available on the market. This procedure can only be used in special circumstances.

Term	Description
ITT	Invitation to Tender (ITT) is a document, normally consisting of a specification/overview of requirements, evaluation procedure, and contractual terms that bidders are required to submit a bid for.
Negotiated Procedure without prior publication	A bidder is invited to enter negotiations with a view to agreeing the terms of a contract. This procedure is only used in exceptional circumstances.
Open Procedure	A single stage procurement procedure.
PCS	Public Contracts Scotland is the Scottish Government portal for all Scottish based public bodies to publish public tender opportunities.
PCS-Tender	Public Contracts Scotland Tender is the Scottish Government's tendering portal for public contracts.
PIN	Prior Information Notice sometimes published in advance of the Contract Notice to advertise a future contract opportunity.
PQQ	PQQ stands for prequalification questionnaire to check bidders meet any exclusion and selection criteria required.
Product Categories	Categorisation of supplies, services, or works contracts used in PCS to codify public tenders.
Public Procurement Regulations	The UK and Scottish laws that regulate public sector procurement.
Quick Quote (QQ)	Quick Quotes provides a mechanism within PCS to invite selected bidders to "quote" for low value contracts.
Restricted Procedure	A two stage procurement process involving a selection process using the SPD to restrict the number of bidders who are then invited in a second stage to tender.
Scottish Business Pledge	A voluntary public pledge by businesses to meet minimum standards related to Fair Work Practices.
Single Point of Enquiry	Contact point to provide advice on suspected unfair or discriminatory procurement practices.
Supplier Finder Profile	Bidders can create a Supplier Finder Profile on PCS with their information, details and services provided. Buyers can search for suppliers when they run Quick Quotes for low value contracts that matches their requirements.

3.0

The importance of public procurement

Public procurement is important because of the high number of business opportunities available in Scotland related to public spending. There are few businesses or organisations who can afford to ignore this. The contracts relating to these opportunities are subject to the Scottish Public Procurement Regulations. Public procurement is a £11 million marketplace for supplies, works, and services in Scotland alone.

Bidding for public contracts should, therefore, be a core skill that every business considers developing. It is also important that bidders know that when they bid, there is a level playing field and that their bid will be properly considered.

In relation to energy efficiency and renewables, improving the energy efficiency of buildings is a key component of the Scottish Government's plans to tackle carbon emissions, with energy efficiency designated a national infrastructure priority, and with additional benefits including security of supply, improved health and well-being and job creation.

At the domestic level, it also helps address fuel poverty. Fuel poverty affects 36% (or 898,000)¹ of Scotland's households. A household is defined as being in fuel poverty if they spend more than 10% of their income on energy.

There are several schemes designed to make homes and businesses more energy efficient. In most cases these schemes will be public tenders managed by local authorities, registered social landlords, and managing agents to deliver improvement targets.

Bidders in this marketplace must learn to write better bids in a regulated procurement market that has specific legislation and rules about how the process is managed and how they should respond.



4.0

The Public Procurement Regulations

The Public Procurement Regulations² define how public procurement is managed. They also try to address the wider issues associated with spending public money, including Community Benefits, Equality and Diversity, and Fair Work Practices, including facilitating more SMEs and local supply chain involvement.

You do not need to know every detail of the Public Procurement Regulations but bidders who are aware of the rules tend to perform better and win more bids.

The legislation and procedures initially can be overwhelming, and bidders can confuse this with bureaucracy and red tape. This was a key part of the feedback from suppliers in this marketplace for developing this guide. There is a misconception that public sector procurement is a hurdle to get over and the rules are designed to protect or defend buyers. However, this is not the case. In fact, the Public Procurement Regulations are designed to protect bidders and ensure there is a level playing field when bidding for tenders.

For most bidders, the details of the Public Procurement Regulations are not as important as the spirit and understanding of some of the key steps of the tender process. How the buyer manages the procurement process is prescribed to them by the Public Procurement Regulations. This means buyers must do things in certain ways. If you spend some time to understand these steps, then you will be in a better position to respond and manage the process of putting a bid together. However, the underlying principles are easy to understand.

The three tests

The general principles of the Public Procurement Regulations are quite simple and can be summarised by these three tests:

1. You will be treated in a fair manner.
2. Any decision making about your bid will be objective.
3. You will not be discriminated against for any reason.

These three tests must be passed in every public procurement process. Although rarely the case, sometimes mistakes do happen and when they do bidders can challenge the outcome of the tender process.

¹ Scottish House Condition Survey: the Scottish Government, January 2020

² The Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015 and Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014

Proportionality

The Public Procurement Regulations define how a buyer must manage a tender process. Depending on the value of the contract the rules apply to varying degrees for low, medium, and high value contracts. This is the principle of proportionality in terms of how the regulations are applied and the process is managed. If the contract being tendered is high risk / high value then buyers should manage the process in a certain way e.g. more competition is required for a high risk / high value contract to ensure they test the market and make a good decision versus a contract that is low risk / low value where less competition is necessary.

Public contracts are organised into different categories. Different financial thresholds apply to different types of contracts. Different approaches are taken, and rules apply depending on whether the contract value is above or below the threshold.

The financial thresholds are constituted in Scottish law.

Table 1:
Contract thresholds

Financial thresholds*	Supplies	Services	Works
Central government	£122,976	£122,976	£4,733,252
Local government	£189,330	£189,330	£4,733,252
Quick Quotes	£50,000	£50,000	£2,000,000

If the proposed contract value exceeds the defined threshold then the Public Procurement Regulations are fully applied to that tender process. In proportionate terms contracts lower than the defined thresholds are advertised and published as notices on Public Contract Scotland (PCS) online portal.

Where the contract is of a low value (generally £50k or below for supplies and services and £2 million for works) the buyer can invite selected bidders to provide a Quick Quote (QQ). This is a compliant tender process to reflect the lower risk and lower value of these contracts. Only bidders who have completed their Supplier Finder Profile on PCS are invited to participate in QQ exercises.

*The biannual thresholds are valid from 1st January 2020.

Selecting a tender procedure

The buyer must select a tender procedure. There are several different options available. The Open Procedure is a general default position adopted by public bodies for most tenders. This is a one-step tender process that includes both a qualification and tender stage. This is used in preference to other procedures where bidders could be disqualified from the process before being able to submit a tender. Historically this was very harsh on smaller and younger businesses who were unable to prequalify. However, you should still always check that you can meet the minimum selection and exclusion criteria defined by the buyer to qualify and be able to bid in the first place or seek clarification on what alternative or equivalent evidence could be provided to satisfy any criteria defined.

The choice of procedure by the buyer depends on the degree of certainty that the buyer has around their requirement, demand, and circumstances. However, in most cases you will be involved in an Open Procedure.

The Open Procedure has a single Invite to Tender (ITT) stage which includes a Qualification Envelope, including exclusion and selection criteria submitted at the same time. A Restricted Procedure has two stages including a qualification stage which restricts the number of candidates invited to bid followed by an ITT. The choice of procedure also defines the minimum timescales that must be observed to allow bidders to respond.

Our guide will focus on the Open Procedure, but the buyer can choose from a number of tendering procedures including:

- Restricted
- Competitive Dialogue
- Negotiated Procedure without prior publication
- Accelerated Procedure
- Competitive Procedure with Negotiation
- Innovation Partnerships

The timescales for the most commonly used Open or Restricted Procedure are as follows:

Table 2:
Procedure timelines

Procedure	Selection (days)	Tender stage	Tender submitted online
Open	NA	35	30
Restricted	30	30	30

If the tender is submitted online the deadline can be reduced by a further 5 days. If a Prior Information Notice (PIN) is published, then the timeline can be reduced further to 15 days and 10 days for the Open and Restricted Procedure, respectively.

These procedures are used to award a traditional contract or to set up a Framework Agreement.

Framework Agreements

A Framework is an agreement with one or more suppliers that governs the terms and conditions that apply to any contracts resulting from the agreement.

Bidders have to compete through an initial tender process to win a place on the Framework in the first place. The Framework Agreement does not guarantee any work in itself. The Framework also defines the process to call off contracts. Contracts can be awarded based on how bidders ranked in the initial tendering process or through a further mini-competition process for a specific contract subject to the Framework Agreement.

A Contracting Authority may use a Framework or collaborate with others who then become parties to and can access the Framework when it is put in place. The Framework can be split into different Lots, by service or geography for example, and bidders can bid for one, some or all Lots depending on their own circumstances. Every Lot is evaluated on its own merits. This can help SMEs bid for some Lots that are more attractive to them than others or that they could deliver successfully rather than bidding for all Lots.

Dynamic Procurement System (DPS)

A DPS is a two stage process for commonly procured goods and services. Stage 1 includes an SPD submission. If a supplier is not excluded and meets the selection criteria, they are admitted to the DPS. In Stage 2 all suppliers on the DPS are invited to bid for specific tender opportunities. The Contract Notice remains open for the duration of the DPS and new suppliers can join, subject to meeting minimum criteria, at any stage.

Forward plan

All public bodies spending more than £5 million annually maintain a forward plan that can be accessed through PCS that provides visibility of the next 2 years procurement plans as part of their Procurement Strategy. The forward plan provides bidders with information on potential contract opportunities that may be advertised over a 12-18 month period. Public bodies should also produce a Contract Register for all contracts awarded, subject to certain thresholds and other conditions, and published on PCS but usually more readily available on their own website.

Equality and Diversity

Fairness, inclusivity, and sustainability are at the heart of the Scottish Government's strategy and reflected in all their policies about how they do their business. This extends to procurement and contracts. Bidders are expected to have policies and procedures in place that ensure that they can also meet these expectations and standards.

Bidders will be expected to have a policy or management statement in place that states your position on equality and diversity and that no discriminatory practices or processes exist within your business or organisation.

It is important that your business can demonstrate this alongside reports on diversity statistics and a breakdown of your workforce if asked. This can demonstrate that you not only have a policy but practice and monitor equality and diversity within your business.

Fair Work Practices

Fair Work Practices is another Scottish Government initiative which encourages best practice from employers on how they manage employees. On the surface these sound like very reasonable things to do like flexible working and paying the minimum wage and minimum expectations that individuals as employees might have.

The Scottish Government extend this same approach to how contracts are procured and managed, and expect employers to aspire to best practice standards and behaviours when delivering the contract within their own business but also in relation to subcontractors and supply chain based on:

- security
- respect
- opportunity
- fulfilment
- effective voice.

The Scottish Government has produced a Fair Work Practices Toolkit for further reference.

The Scottish Business Pledge is also an opportunity to publicly declare that your business subscribes to Fair Work Practices including:

- paying the real Living Wage
- no inappropriate use of zero hours contracts
- action to address the gender pay gap
- environment impact
- investing in a skilled and diverse workforce
- workforce engagement
- innovation
- internationalisation
- supporting your community
- prompt payment.

Community Benefits

Community Benefits are a key requirement of public procurement. They should remind every bidder about the original purpose of a public contract which is to deliver a public benefit. This closes the loop on why procurement is required or necessary in the first place, placing sustainable and socially responsible purchasing at the heart of the process. Community Benefits will become increasingly significant and be formally scored as part of the evaluation of tenders. Buyers have discretion about the weighting or importance they apply to this.

When creating your bid, you need to consider what the community benefit is. So, you need to ensure that you can:

- describe it
- identify who will benefit
- quantify that benefit in monetary or equivalent terms if possible
- qualify what that benefit will do for particular groups within the community.

Use the following table to consider what Community Benefits you can, or already deliver through a public contract. The table also includes some examples.

Table 3:
Community Benefits exercise

#	Benefit	Description (what)	Recipient (who)	Quantify / Qualify
1	Social			
2	Economic			
3	Environmental			



Community Benefits are designed so that the community receives the maximum benefit the contract is designed to provide a service to. They should be linked to the main purpose of the contract in terms of sustaining or adding employees, apprentices, or upskilling or developing new skills, as well as the additional benefits delivered to end users. Community Benefits must be relevant and proportionate to the contract.

5.0

Managing the tender process

There are two key aspects to creating a winning bid:

1. Managing the tendering process itself. This means starting early, doing your research, thinking about your bid tactics, and creating a plan with milestones as you progress towards the deadline.
2. Creating your bid. You need to make time and space in your schedule to translate your ideas about how you can meet the specified requirements and deliver the contract better than every other bidder.

We can think about this in terms of what happens before, during and after the contract is awarded.

Table 4:
Tender process from a buyers' and bidders' perspective

#	Stage	What is the buyer doing?	What should bidders be doing?
1	Before	<p>The buyer is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ establishing requirements■ trying to understand the marketplace■ developing a sourcing strategy■ engaging with bidders■ creating an appropriate level of competition and selecting a procedure to run the tender■ defining exclusion and selection criteria■ deciding how much value for money (quality / price) is required■ specifying a requirement■ publishing a Contract Notice (advert for a contract) via PCS.	<p>Bidders should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ try to build a relationship with potential target buyers■ develop their own value proposition for different buyers – see page 26 and 27 for more on this topic■ attend 'meet the buyer' events■ make sure they have set up PCS alerts properly to ensure that they receive notification of relevant tenders, otherwise, they should monitor PCS notices on a regular basis and perhaps expand their Alert Profile to include additional categories and geographical areas.
2	During Qualification stage – exclusions and selection criteria:	<p>The buyer is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ checking minimum legal requirements■ checking selection and exclusion criteria■ testing bidders' capability to deliver the contract■ testing bidders have sufficient capacity to deliver the contract.	<p>Bidders should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ ensure they can meet any minimum legal requirements defined■ submit policies including quality, health and safety, environmental, equality and diversity, business continuity, and disaster recovery to demonstrate and provide evidence that their business is sustainable and resilient.

#	Stage	What is the buyer doing?	What should bidders be doing?
2	Continued	<p>The buyer is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ identifying bidders' capability and capacity to deliver the contract and invite to tender. 	<p>Bidders should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ develop or define their capabilities that reflect the services they provide and that will match the requirements of the tenders they will be bidding for ■ define and explain their capacity to deliver the contract – how many similar contracts like this they have previously delivered.
	Invitation to Tender (ITT):	<p>The buyer is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ inviting bidders who have prequalified to submit a tender ■ perhaps holding a briefing for invited bidders ■ responding to questions from bidders via the Q&A section of the PCS or PCS-Tender ■ receiving responses ■ evaluating (score) bids against quality / price criteria defined ■ awarding contract ■ providing feedback to unsuccessful bidders. 	<p>Bidders should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ read and understand the specification and terms and conditions of the contract ■ attend briefing if one is being held ■ ask sensible questions via the Q&A facility in PCS or PCS-Tender (do not ask about things that are clearly stated in the specification or other documents) ■ identify long lead time items for their tender on day one of the ITT not the week or day before the deadline ■ write their bid ■ submit their bid in the required format in advance of the due date and time.
3	After Award Stage:	<p>The buyer is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ advising successful bidder(s) ■ advising unsuccessful bidders ■ providing feedback (this is only an obligation if the contract value exceeds financial thresholds) ■ observing standstill period (requirement as above) ■ awarding contract as specified and published. 	<p>Bidders should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ask for feedback if successful ■ ask for feedback if you are unsuccessful ■ prepare, if a meeting is offered for feedback ■ ask for strengths and weaknesses of their bid and scores for each section if not already provided ■ consider their last bid as the starting point, plus improvements, for their next bid.

You can see from the table there are a lot of things to do when you are writing your bid. On that basis you need to be organised and use your time efficiently if you are going to produce a successful bid.

6.0

Finding opportunities

Finding public sector tendering opportunities has never been easier in Scotland. The procurement transformation in the public sector means that contracts are advertised via Public Contracts Scotland (PCS). The PCS online portal is the default tender portal for contracts advertised by Scottish public bodies.

Public Contracts Scotland

PCS is one of the most user-friendly portals available. With internet access you can be up and running in 10 minutes. Registering on PCS will give you access to all public contracts advertised in Scotland. However, some initial effort is required. Regardless of how familiar you are with PCS you should still check that you have completed the following steps:

Table 5:
Key steps for using PCS and PCS-Tender portals

#	Task	Description	Completed
1	PCS registration	<p>Registration is simple and straightforward. Navigate via your browser to Public Contracts Scotland and complete the steps and provide the information requested. You will have to provide a username and password and validate your account.</p> <p>Once registered you can navigate through PCS from the Supplier Control Panel to all parts of the site. It is easy to use and navigate, from browsing for Contract Notices to searching for buyers which are all menu driven.</p>	
2	Alert Profile	<p>Once registered you can set up your Alert Profile from the Supplier Control Panel. The system will send you alerts for types of contracts that you are interested in. To indicate what types of contracts you are interested in you need to set preferences in the system. These preferences are by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Product Categories■ Geographical Locations <p>Types of contract are organised by Product Categories. You can refine alerts by selecting product types based on the supplies, services, or works you wish to tender for. The second decision is about geography or where you would like to or prefer to work. Again, this is menu driven by selecting geographical areas from a list. If your selections are too narrow then you might miss some opportunities, however, over a period you can refine your selections and will then receive more appropriate Contract Notices.</p> <p>Once your Alert Profile is set up PCS will send you a regular email to alert you to any suitable contracts that you might choose to tender for.</p>	

#	Task	Description	Completed
3	Supplier Finder Profile	<p>Within PCS you can also create a Supplier Finder Profile. The Supplier Finder Profile will increase your visibility to buyers, making your organisation visible to buyers when they search for suppliers. Your Supplier Finder Profile can be created and amended from the 'My Profile' tab within PCS. It will include your company logo, some brief information, and key words to reflect products or services you can supply. Completing the Supplier Finder Profile means that buyers can select you and invite you to provide a Quick Quote. Ensure that you publish your profile to make it visible to buyers.</p>	
4	Quick Quotes	<p>If and when a buyer has a low value contract, they can use QQ to invite a limited number of bidders to provide a quote (quickly) to deliver a contract. The QQ system is popular with buyers and bidders and provides a compliant and proportionate approach to the value of contract being offered.</p>	
5	PCS-Tender	<p>PCS-Tender is a tendering module that works alongside PCS.</p> <p>As you become more confident and perhaps when you are bidding for larger contracts you will see in the Contract Notice that the buyer is using PCS-Tender to run the tender process. PCS-Tender is a tendering platform which means you will have to add or upload your information directly in a prescribed format. This can be daunting the first time you look at this but there are many advantages including the ability to upload standard documentation to your profile.</p> <p>PCS-Tender is an e-tendering portal. It comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Qualification Envelope (based on Extended Profile) ■ Technical Response or Envelope ■ Commercial Response or Envelope. <p>You will have to upload each section and individual answers in response to specific questions.</p>	
6	Extended Profile	<p>The Extended Profile is a key part of PCS-Tender. It allows you to upload "standard" information like policies and accreditations, accounts, and insurance levels to PCS-Tender. These can then be re-used for different tenders without the requirement to repeat this process again saving time and allowing you to focus on questions related to a specific tender.</p>	



You can link your PCS-Tender profile to PCS. This means you have one log in and access to both systems from the Supplier Control Panel in PCS. PCS-Tender registration requires an 'Extended Profile' but once this is set up it can be used every time when you bid for different tenders.

If, and when things change you must remember to update your profile e.g. annual accounts information and annual renewals for insurance or policy documents.

There is no cost to register and use PCS, which is one of its great advantages, unlike some commercial portals where you have to pay to use them. However, they may also prove useful to you as you become a more experienced bidder.

Energy efficiency and renewables contracts

Energy efficiency contracts will be published using the PCS-Tender portal.

The buyer publishes, advertises, and tags the contract opportunity with Product Categories. If you have set up your PCS account using these Product Categories and they match the published opportunity, then the PCS system will send an email alert to the email account you used to set up your profile. If there is no match, then the alert will not be sent to you directly. You could still check daily to look for suitable contracts but of course this is much more time consuming.

The Product Categories are based on international standards for categories and simplify searching for contracts. The more Product Categories you add to your account profile the more alerts you will receive that match those codes.

The Product Categories can look quite intimidating but are just codes based on a parent / child hierarchy that links services or products together. Some relevant codes for energy efficiency contracts could include:

Table 6:
Typical Product Categories for energy efficiency contracts

#	Product Category	Description
1	540	Special Projects / Events
2	45000000	Construction Work
3	45300000	Building Installation Work
4	45320000	Insulation Work
5	45321000	Thermal Insulation Work

Major procurements could be classified and published as a Special Project using the above code. In other situations, this could be published using the parent 45000000 or child codes 45300000, 45320000 or the more specific 45321000.

TOP TIP: Err on the side of caution and add more rather than fewer Product Codes. This means that irrespective of what code(s) the buyer uses the higher the chance that your Account Profile will match the code for a published opportunity, and you will receive an alert.

You should refine and add Product Categories for contracts that you are interested in.

7.0

Understanding your own capability and capacity

One of the most important parts of bidding for a tender is understanding your own business or organisation. The more you understand your business and how it works the better you will be able to describe that to someone else. It is really important when you are writing a bid that you can translate what and how you do things to the proposed contract. It is important that you can explain your expertise and experience and how this will be used to deliver a successful contract.

In more technical terms this is about your capability – what you do – and capacity – how much you have done – to provide the buyer with the reassurance and confidence that your bid is the best proposal to deliver the contract. These need to be properly explained.

Capability

What are your capabilities? This is a key part of both prequalifying and building your bid. Many bidders have a very narrow understanding of their capabilities or are unable to express this in a way that communicates to the buyer what the bidder actually does or can provide. As well as delivering the specific task or requirement are there other capabilities that you have that allow you to deliver that core or basic task in the first place. What are they? Use the following table to define the capabilities your business has.

Table 7:
Capability exercise 1

#	Capability
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	



Is this easy to do? Did you focus on what you do – or the main tasks in delivering your service? Bidders often focus on the delivery aspect of their service e.g. installation, in one sense that is correct and vital, but it is only one part of the process.

What are the other bits that they do not see or are not visible? For instance, installers do not just turn up and install. There is a lot of planning and preparation required before that can happen.

Consider what else you must do before delivering your service. Try and complete the following table and think about what you do before and after.

Table 8:
Capability exercise 2

#	Capability
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	



Your capabilities might include design, plan / prepare, supply, right up to installation and afterwards the testing and commissioning or evaluation of the service provided. These are just some examples based on an installer. Other bidders or contractors will of course differ. Do not forget to include your know-how, experience, and wider capabilities. Above all do not undersell yourself.

The clearer you can articulate your capabilities the better your bid will be.

Capability

The next test is your capacity. What is the capacity of your business? The first reaction might be to define this as follows:

- turnover
- number of employees.

These are capacity indicators, but you should also consider other ways of measuring capacity. For example, you may be asked about your existing business and contracts you have delivered:

- Who is your biggest contract with?
- Can you provide a list of your top five or 10 contracts?
- Can you provide a list of your clients from largest to smallest?

These are measures of capacity but if you spend some time analysing this further, you can perhaps define and explain your capacity better. Then you can provide a better explanation and context about your business and skills to provide the buyer with more confidence about your ability to deliver this contract.

A business with £1 million turnover has enough capacity to absorb a contract of £100k so a buyer would be quite comfortable that you had enough capacity to deliver that contract and that it would be a low risk.

If we now think about the same business but bidding for a £5 million contract, then this is reversed, and we would perhaps be more concerned – higher risk – about that business’ ability to absorb that contract.

Try and complete the following table and combine what you did when you delivered contracts in the past and how much of each capability was required to deliver each part of the contract i.e. split the value of the contract across each of the capabilities that were required to deliver the service. Start with the value of the contract and then split the value into percentage parts for each capability e.g. perhaps 10% of the value related to an initial design or survey activity you undertook.

This short table assumes you have five capabilities and have five previous contracts to analyse.

Table 9:
Capacity and capability exercise

#	Capability	Contract (£)					Totals (£)
		1	2	3	4	5	
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
	Totals (£)						



After completing this table, you will have a clearer picture of what you have delivered in previous contracts.

In practical terms you will have to demonstrate your capability and capacity in terms of your accreditations, skills and training or qualifications. Your capacity is a function of the resources you can engage or employ directly or indirectly through subcontracts, your previous experience, and evidence of contracts you have already delivered. Think about and use all of these when you are asked a specific question to answer or when putting all the different parts of your bid together.

8.0

Bid strategy

If you can bid smarter it means you can bid better and bid for more contracts. A good success rate would be winning three out of ten bids. Maybe you already achieve this win rate or better but for many this seems like a stretch target. The point is that you will not win everything you bid for!

How do you increase your win rate? As a bidder there may be a temptation to bid for every tender opportunity you see. This will demand a lot of time and effort and may bring huge disappointment with it if you are unsuccessful with these bids. You should consider developing a bidding strategy which will ensure your resources are put to best use. In addition, you should also consider different tactics for each individual bid.

Do your homework

A good bid strategy includes doing your homework. Take time to research each opportunity in advance, for instance if you are aware of a Framework that is coming to an end why not try and obtain the previous tender documentation that was used by the buyer in order to gauge some of the criteria that is evaluated. Buyers in the public sector will normally be receptive to requests for this information if you contact them directly or you can access it via PCS.

Of course not all opportunities may be worth pursuing, and bidders should consider whether they have the capacity (this is discussed in section 7) to deliver a specific contract and whether they have the time and resources to complete the tender documentation, as well as any other factors which might affect whether to bid or not.

Prepare documents in advance

Successful bidders already know that they will be asked for the same or similar information in different bids. It is important not to have to reinvent the wheel every time you bid. There is some information that will always be required or that can be easily adapted for other tenders. To save time and effort over the longer term, develop a tender library that includes standard and other materials that can be used in your bid. This falls into three categories:

Table 10:
Tender library

#	Description	Content
1	Standard Material	Policies Insurance Documents Accounts Accreditations and Certificates
2	Information that can be adapted	Team Information Case Studies
3	Material that is specific to a tender	Methodology Risk Challenges Project Plan Pricing

This approach illustrates how important it is to develop as much material and information as possible in advance and keep it up to date. Otherwise your approach to bidding will be reactive and inconsistent. This is not the best approach.

The more time you spend on developing standard material and information that can be adapted between bids means you can spend more time on specific parts required for each tender. The specific parts of each tender exercise are where most quality points can be "scored". The more time you can spend on this and not be distracted by mundane or routine issues, which can be very time consuming, the better.

This approach will also mean that you can bid for more contracts. Once you can win a public tender then the next stage is about productivity and how many bids you can submit. More effort on your tender library will increase productivity and reduce the effective cost of putting a bid together.

This same approach is reflected in electronic tendering systems. These systems allow you to upload standard material that can be stored and kept up to date and re-used for different tenders rather than duplicating efforts. That means you can focus on the important sections specific to each tender and maximise your quality score.

Value for money - Quality / Price

Bidders should try to integrate public tenders into their business development process and vary their tactics between bids. The key to this is understanding value for money. Value for money in public tenders is the balance between quality and price. This is published in the Contract Notice and defines the objective criteria and how the tender will be scored.

When the buyer talks about quality, they are referring to the quality of the bid that has been presented. The better the quality of the bid the higher the quality score. Conversely, the lower the price then the higher the price score with the lowest price scoring the highest points. Other prices received are compared against that. The system is a pro rata or ratio system e.g. double the price would score half the points available versus the lowest price.

The buyer has discretion to decide the weighting between quality and price. For products and services where there is plentiful supply (and low risk) the weighting may be more towards price. If the service is more specialised, then the weighting may be lower on price and higher on quality. This is significant in terms of how you might choose to bid, particularly on price. A high price weighting does not mean quality is not important but does indicate that price will be a key determining factor in the outcome of the tender.

To illustrate this point, consider the following example and scenario based on a quality / price 60% / 40% weighting. The lowest price receives the maximum points available for the price score or 40%.

Table 11:
Implications of price weighting on scoring

#	Lowest price	Price score	Deficit
1	£100	40%	0%
2	£120	33%	7%
3	£140	28%	12%
4	£160	25%	15%
5	£180	22%	18%
6	£200	20%	20%

All the other bid prices are compared and scored relative to the lowest price.

Looking at the different scenarios and splits, then at 60% / 40% if you are double the price that means you are 20 points behind the lowest price bid. You would need to make this up by scoring 20 more points in the quality evaluation, worth 60 points in this example, versus the lowest price bid to have a higher overall score. Another way of thinking about this is that the lowest price bidder would have to score 20 points less than you in the quality section or one point less in every 3, assuming you get full marks – which you probably will not manage to do despite your best efforts!

Very low-priced bids can also be discounted for being abnormally low. This means that the buyer is not beholden to a lowest price bid where it is abnormally low or is not economic for the bidder to deliver and can be rejected.

It is highly unlikely you would be able to make up a 15 or 20 point deficit. Of course, this may also be an unlikely example, but you can see the impact of a low price bid in relation to your own. If the lowest price is a genuine bid, you perhaps do not want to bid at that low level, but you need to be much closer than double the price to have a chance of having the best overall quality and price score.

The other key issue is that you do not know how other bidders will price the contract so you are also anticipating or speculating what others might do.

TOP TIP: You should consider your tactics. This might mean reviewing your business forecast and pipeline e.g. if there is a gap or if you need to win some business you might bid lower than normal on price. Conversely you might be very busy and see an opportunity you would like to bid for. You might bid higher on price on the basis that you could be more opportunistic in these circumstances but risk losing the tender.

The quality / price combination that defines value for money means that you do not need to have the lowest price to win if your quality score is high enough. Conversely when the quality weighting is higher you could perhaps bid higher on price if you were confident about your quality score (you could establish this from the feedback received from previous tenders).

Often bidders tend not to spend enough time thinking about their tactics.

9.0 Extended Profile

The Extended Profile is used as the Qualification Envelope as part of the Open tender procedure when the buyer uses PCS-Tender (the equivalent when PCS is used is the SPD).

The Extended Profile was introduced partly in response to feedback from bidders about the effort and duplication required to prepare and submit numerous different forms of prequalification questionnaires and extensive supporting material every time they bid for a contract.

The Extended Profile has completely changed how this is managed. Now rather than repeatedly submitting the same information bidders can complete the Extended Profile and retain their up-to-date information and documentation online. In many cases this is a self-declaration of standard information and specific information required for different tenders. Once established this means that the Extended Profile can be reused and updated only when required between tenders. The time savings for regular bidders is significant.

The Extended Profile will also include an exclusion and selection criteria that must be met. The exclusion criteria are the first thing you should check e.g. this could be a minimum turnover threshold figure determined in relation to the value and duration of the contract. This returns to some of the themes we have discussed earlier in this document about capacity. It could also include minimum qualifications or certification required to undertake or do a particular job or task where these are considered essential or vital from a technical or safety perspective.

Other exclusion criteria relate to issues to check that your business complies with the laws of the land and the public money invested in your business will not be used for any illegal purposes.

Having established that you can meet any exclusion criteria you should check you can also meet any selection criteria.

This is intended to exclude bidders who are not able to meet the exclusion criteria and focus on bidders who have the characteristics and skills that are required to deliver the contract.

Table 12:
Extended Profile categories for consideration

#	Category	Description
1	Exclusion	This assesses whether each bidder complies with Scottish law, solvency, litigation, conflicts of interest and other mandatory requirements consistent with the jurisdiction of the contract. Failure to meet any defined mandatory requirements will mean automatic disqualification. The buyer may also apply discretionary exclusions relevant to the contract.
2	Selection Criteria	This includes policies for quality, health and safety, environmental, equality and diversity and business continuity and disaster recovery. This can also typically be for certain kinds of expertise relevant to a particular contract e.g. PAS2030 certification for energy efficiency installations or a commitment to achieve it within a certain period could be required. It is expected that you will have these policies in place or some equivalent. A company who has them in place will perform better than one that does not (if they can progress at all).

#	Category	Description
3	Capability and Capacity	<p>Capability is tested in terms of the range of specific capabilities required to deliver the contract. These can be wide ranging, but it is important that they are specific and relate to the contract.</p> <p>Capacity is tested as a function of the 'amount' of appropriate experience that the bidder has in relation to the contract specific requirements.</p> <p>This is usually established by technical examples or previous contracts that you have delivered, and other technical requirements related to the delivery of the contract.</p>

The Extended Profile is an integral part of PCS-Tender and is one of three separate response "envelopes" you will have to complete, along with a Technical and Commercial Response or Envelope as part of an Open tender procedure. Whilst much of the Extended Profile process and information is self-declared the buyer can ask for evidence to support this at any time during the tender process. There are also grounds for exclusion which deals with breaches of social, environmental and employment law obligations. Therefore, if a buyer can demonstrate by any appropriate means that a bidder has breached any of these obligations, they may, at their discretion, choose to exclude that bidder from bidding for contracts or ask the bidder to correct the specific issue through a process called self cleansing.

TOP TIP: Complete your Extended Profile online as much as possible and keep it up to date in anticipation of bidding for one or more contracts in the future.

The equivalent document in PCS is the SPD which can be downloaded as a document to complete and return, or as an electronic form to complete online.

Why are policies important?

Policies are important as they can demonstrate your conformance to certain requirements in a standardised manner. The buyer can compare and contrast the maturity of one business versus another in terms of the policies and procedures in place.

You do not necessarily need to have independently accredited systems but if you do not then you will be asked to explain how your organisation manages health and safety, environmental sustainability and quality (amongst other relevant factors) and be expected to provide supporting evidence for your equivalent approach.

Table 13:
Example policies and accreditations

#	Policy	Accreditation	If not, explain	Evidence
1	Quality	ISO 9001	How do you manage and control quality in your business and in the service you deliver?	Surveys, customer satisfaction, and service levels all provide the buyer with some reassurance that you have a process to manage the quality of the service you provide.
2	Health and Safety	OHSAS 18000	How do you ensure the health and safety of your employees and others affected by your activities?	Health and safety performance statistics for your business.
3	Environmental	ISO 14001	What environmental procedures do you have in place?	What environmental benefits can you provide evidence for – can it be quantified?
4	Equality and Diversity		That you do not discriminate against anyone for any reason and this is reflected in your recruitment and employment practices.	Procedures and statistics to support your approach.
5	Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery		What are the disruptions that might affect the delivery of your service and what control measures are in place?	Are systems tested regularly and how resilient is your business?
6	Data Protection	GDPR	How do you manage personal data associated with the contract?	You are registered with the Information Commissioners Office and have processes in place to manage personal data.
7	Modern Slavery	GDPR	How do you ensure that you or any part of your supply chain is not engaged in modern slavery or child exploitation?	You are aware, know and can check your sources and wider supply chain for products and services that you use.

Policies can in fact be tools to improve your business, so it is important to demonstrate that to the buyer. If you have an independent accreditation it is usually enough to provide a copy. If you do not have accreditation you should be prepared to explain what your policy is and provide evidence to support that. All of these policies are aspirations and standards that public bodies expect bidders to meet.

They also reflect the Scottish Government's risk and opportunity based Scottish Model of Procurement with a focus on ethical and sustainable procurement and support social, economic, and environmental targets. Your policies should all be kept up to date and signed by the appropriate manager or director within your business.

10.0

Responding to the ITT – writing your bid

Often bidders start writing too early. They reassure themselves that as long as they are busy that they must be productive in writing a good bid.

Do not start writing just yet!

Structure and content

Instead of writing a long document, which is a difficult thing to do, an alternative approach is to create the structure for your bid first. The structure may be defined for you if you have to complete pro-forma documents or complete them online. However, it is important to start with the structure as opposed to creating a lot of content for your bid and then trying to structure that into a coherent and easy to understand response. This latter approach is the most time consuming way to do this and you can spend more time editing than creating a good response in the first place. More often than not when using PCS-Tender there may be a page or word restriction on your answer.

TOP TIP: As a rule of thumb, the more you write the less clear the response. Remember someone must read this, understand it, and score it. Most writers know what they have written and what it was supposed to mean. This is not always true when someone else reads it. They might understand it quite differently or maybe not at all! If the evaluator cannot understand what you have written it will not score well.

Your first challenge is to understand what you are trying to sell to the buyer through a tender process. All the sales skills and techniques that you have developed face to face with customers over the years do not count in this process. How do you sell something to a buyer or address key points to an evaluation panel who are reading what you have produced when you cannot speak directly to them?

Some unsuccessful bidders are unable to articulate what it is they are trying to sell and /or explain, in succinct terms, how they are going to deliver the contract. It is therefore important that these issues are addressed. You should work on the assumption that the buyer does not know anything about you or your business and explain your answers to questions on that basis. You will only be scored on the information you present – you cannot be scored on information you do not present.

Value proposition

Your value proposition is an important concept in challenging yourself to write a better bid. So, what is your value proposition?

This is not an easy question to answer. Responses often highlight features and benefits or describe high quality products or accreditations like ISO certifications or low cost solutions. What is your value proposition? Have a go using the table below.

Table 14:
Value proposition

What is your value proposition?



Do not confuse your value proposition with what you will do or deliver (the task) and how you propose to deliver the contract (the method) which are both very important in themselves.

You need to define your value proposition in terms of what it means to the buyer and perhaps, more importantly, for end users or customers. The buyer could be a local authority for an energy efficiency contract and the customers could be tenants and householders. Both have different expectations and consider value in different terms. Look at the following example:

Table 15:
Example of value proposition

What do you do?	How do you do it?	Benefits	Value proposition
Install loft insulation (or other energy efficiency measures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ safely ■ cost effectively ■ minimum disruption ■ use the specified material ■ turn up when you said you would ■ install ■ clear up site ■ sign off. 	<p>Buyer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ no accidents ■ compliance ■ carbon reduction ■ reputation. <hr/> <p>Customer (end user):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ service ■ no mess ■ warmer house ■ lower energy bills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Help the buyer deliver Scottish Government targets and enhance their reputation. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improved quality of life and well-being. ■ Results in lower energy costs.

If you are a loft insulation installer and think you only install or fit insulation, then that is probably how you will write your bid.

If you believe your business is about improving people's quality of life you might think a bit differently about how you write your next tender (and maybe how you run your business and deliver the contract).

Here is a blank table for you to try again.

TOP TIP: Complete the table from top to bottom, otherwise you will never get past the what you do section!

Table 16:
Value proposition, what you do and how you do it exercise.

	Buyer	Customer
Value proposition		
Benefits		
How do we do it?		
What do we do?		



This exercise is not easy but if you persist you will create a much better starting point to consider the structure and content of your bid and how you might write your answers.

The most important thing to do is to consider value from the buyer's and end users' perspective. The contract is about what you can do for them, not what the contract can do for you or your business.

Contract specific requirements

The ITT package will include the specification and terms and conditions. The specification defines or tells you what you will be expected to deliver in what time period and to what service, level, or quality.

What are you being asked to do?

Every contract has specific requirements, so you need to distil them from the specification.

What are the key specific things you are being asked to do? This is a really important point and will play a major part in the assessment of the quality section of your tender. If you do not address the specified requirements your bid will not score high for quality.

A specific requirement is an activity that you will need to undertake, manage, or subcontract as part of delivering the contract. Specific requirements for energy efficiency contracts could include activities or elements of survey, assessments, design, procurement and supply management, installation, and maintenance. You might be expected to do some or all of these as part of meeting the specified requirement.

Review the specification

When you read the specification try and break it down into high level requirements using this table.

Table 17:
Reviewing the specification

#	What are the specific requirements of the contract?	What will you do?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		



The table has space for five specific requirements plus some more. It might not always be five but if you end up with more than five you might be over-complicating what is required.

Once you have a clear picture of the specific requirements you can then work out what you will do.

TOP TIP: Complete this table and spend some time understanding what the specific requirements of the contract are. This exercise may sound pedantic but will save you hours of writing and explaining things properly and succinctly in your tender. By doing this you will define the core of your bid, ensure your bid meets the specified requirement and is fit for purpose.

Now you have established what you will do to deliver the specific requirements, your next challenge is to explain how you are going to deliver the requirements. The 'how to' is essentially your methodology. Every specification and ITT asks you to explain your methodology or how you will deliver the contract.

You can use the 'what' you are going to do from the previous table and now think about 'how' you will deliver the contract.

Table 18:
What and How

#	What will you do?	How will you deliver this?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		



You can use this table or create a separate one and work through on a step by step basis what and how you will deliver things. This will create a very structured and logical answer in terms of your approach.

There is no need to write long answers. Using a tabular approach will generate an answer that is well structured, easy to read, understand and score. This can be more productive than writing long answers and then spending more time editing or trying to fit what you wrote to the question you have been asked.



Who are you selling to?

So far this guide has discussed the buyer as the organisation or person you are selling to, however you need to consider that there is a buyer, a specifier (someone who has specified the requirement), and the end user (who the service will be delivered to) who can often be ignored.

All these stakeholders have a view or have different things that are of interest to them. The buyer is interested in running a compliant process and generating sufficient interest and competition (tender) that can deliver value for money. The specifier is interested in the technical aspects or accuracy of your bid in terms of meeting the specified requirements. The end user has a different perspective again, in that they are interested in the quality of the service they will receive. These are all equally important.

It is important in your response that you consider each different point of view. There is the concept of the customer journey – in this context the end user – but if you wrote your bid and focused on the experience of the customer, what does it look like and feel like from their perspective? That would be completely different from a bid that is written which only considers the bidder's perspective.

Consider all your answers from an end user's perspective, the buyer's perspective and then from your (the bidders) perspective. Your answers will look different and better.

Your tender will only ever be as good as your methodology. We highly recommend that you develop your methodology first and every other aspect of your tender will flow from and should be designed to support that.

People are always looking for advice on what a good answer looks like. This does depend on the questions of course, however, it is not so difficult to define what a good answer should include – it is more difficult to write it – but it should include an emphasis on the how:

- what
- HOW
- when
- who
- risks
- evidence.

If the evaluation panel can read and understand your answer then they can score it. The clearer you make each answer, including the above points wherever possible, the better that answer will perform. Some of these items e.g. evidence, may be requested in the form of examples which will support your answer to be more authentic versus a textbook or academic answer.

Open tender procedure

There are different forms of tender procedure. The most common is the Open Procedure. An Open Procedure will comprise three responses or “envelopes”. These are:

1. Qualification Envelope
2. Technical Response or Envelope
3. Commercial Response or Envelope

The envelopes are discrete but are all part of the tender process. They all serve a different purpose. They all exist as electronic modules as part of the PCS–Tender portal.

Table 19:
Open Procedure tender response or envelopes

#	Envelope	Description	Scoring
1	Qualification Envelope	<p>Exclusion and selection criteria. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ mandatory questions ■ compliance questions ■ policies and procedures ■ selection criteria – specific criteria in relation to the technical requirements or the size of the contract if they are required ■ information required for statistical reporting (in relation to public tendering in general) ■ technical examples (normally 2) ■ Community Benefits ■ Fair Work Practices (for information only). 	Pass / Fail
2	Technical Envelope	<p>The Technical Envelope might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ methodology – how you will deliver the contract ■ organisation and your team ■ health and safety roles and responsibilities ■ project plan ■ risks and challenges ■ subcontractors. 	Quality
3	Commercial Envelope	<p>The Commercial Envelope may include an online form or pricing template provided by the buyer. The Commercial Envelope must be fully completed accurately for your bid to be accepted and considered. It could be in the form of a Bill of Quantities or a simple rate or fee sheet.</p>	Price

Have a look again at Table 10 on page 19 to see how a Tender library prepared in advance would help you to prepare for a tender process and the typical information you are going to be asked to provide in the different envelopes.

Components of a good bid

The component parts of a good answer and bid are explained further as follows:

Table 20:
Components of a good bid

#	Item	Description
1	What	This provides a clear description of the task being undertaken to meet the specific requirements of the contract.
2	HOW	A clear description of HOW (method) you will organise tasks and make sure they are all delivered fully and properly. Remember the end-user's journey from when you first engage or contact them until the job is closed out and signed off.
3	When	Once you have defined the what and HOW you need to make sure it all joins up. The timing is important because you need to define what tasks need to be completed before others can begin. This could be presented graphically, as a project plan with milestones and a critical path which might be easier to explain your logic and the sequence of events rather than long written answers.
4	Who	The next step is to explain who will be responsible and accountable to deliver the contract and how they will interface with the buyer. Short and clear specific profiles with a clearly defined role are better than long CV type answers with usually lots of information that is not relevant or specific to the requirement.
5	Risk	The question for the buyer is, not if, but when things go wrong, do you know how to manage that problem? A confident bidder includes risks and has clear mitigations defined – not just a list of potential risks. Also consider this as part of your methodology. This reflects your expertise and understanding of the risks and being able to manage them reflects your experience.
6	Evidence	<p>Evidence can be included in your answer or by providing examples. A piece of evidence might include quantifying the number of clients and not 'we have lots of clients' or 'we have high quality' - which if that is the case, you will have to be able to measure and report it - or 'we have good delivery', and if so what service level performance or delivery performance can you meet?</p> <p>The more specific and relevant the examples to illustrate a key point you are trying to make, the better the score will be. It is also important to explain the context and focus on previous 'lessons learned' and 'benefits'.</p>

Using graphics to illustrate key points

The clearer the message and better explained your answer is, there is more chance that the evaluation team can understand your bid. One way to do this is to replace long narrative answers and paragraphs with tables and lists.

If you cannot avoid a written text answer, we suggest you use bullet points or a numbered list to break the answer down into easy to read parts. If you are presenting data, consider using a graph if possible.

TOP TIP: Remember, someone has to read your bid. If it is difficult to read and understand, it will probably not score as well as other bids e.g. you may want to include a project plan chart that shows activities (tasks or events) displayed against time (or a simple Gantt chart) instead of what would usually be an otherwise long and complicated written answer.

Make sure that all sections are properly indexed and always use page numbers to help readers navigate their way through your bid.

Checking your tender

Things to avoid:

- Do not ignore the specification and think you can outsmart the buyer.
- Do not make assumptions about what the buyer knows about your business or the products or services you are providing.
- Do not try to sell something you want as opposed to what has been specified.
- Do not under-scope your product or service and hope that you can sort it out once you have won the tender.

Make sure:

- you start early and identify long lead time parts or information required for your bid
- your bid is compliant – it meets the specified requirements defined
- your bid meets the specific requirements of the specification – no more / and certainly no less
- you thoroughly answer all the questions asked
- all sections are completed
- check, double check and get someone else to check your final document.

11.0

Getting feedback on your bid?

The award of an above the threshold public contract is subject to a ten day standstill period. The “award” letter is only an intention to award a contract subject to the standstill. Once the standstill has been completed and if no challenges are received then the buyer can award the contract.

If you are unsuccessful then you can get feedback about your bid. If you are successful you should also get feedback, although the context is different for a successful bidder.

This is a requirement for high value (above the financial threshold) contracts in addition to information telling you who won the contract, the winning score and your score. Most buyers will provide feedback to unsuccessful bidders on lower value contracts as well when asked.

It is important to get feedback and to be prepared for any feedback or any meeting you might have. Very few bidders are well prepared for the feedback. When considering feedback, you should:

1. Read your bid again.
2. Try to reconcile the feedback – qualitative evaluation and score with the comments you receive.
3. Ask for your score breakdown in each section of the bid.
4. Ask for the highest and lowest score in that section and where you were in the range of responses.
5. Ask for strengths and weaknesses of your bid by each section / question.
6. Be polite and think about the future opportunities with this potential buyer – perhaps get someone ‘one step removed’ from writing or managing the bid to do this if you can.

Another protection that bidders have in public procurement is if or when things go wrong. Bidders can challenge the outcome of a tender process if they believe they have been:

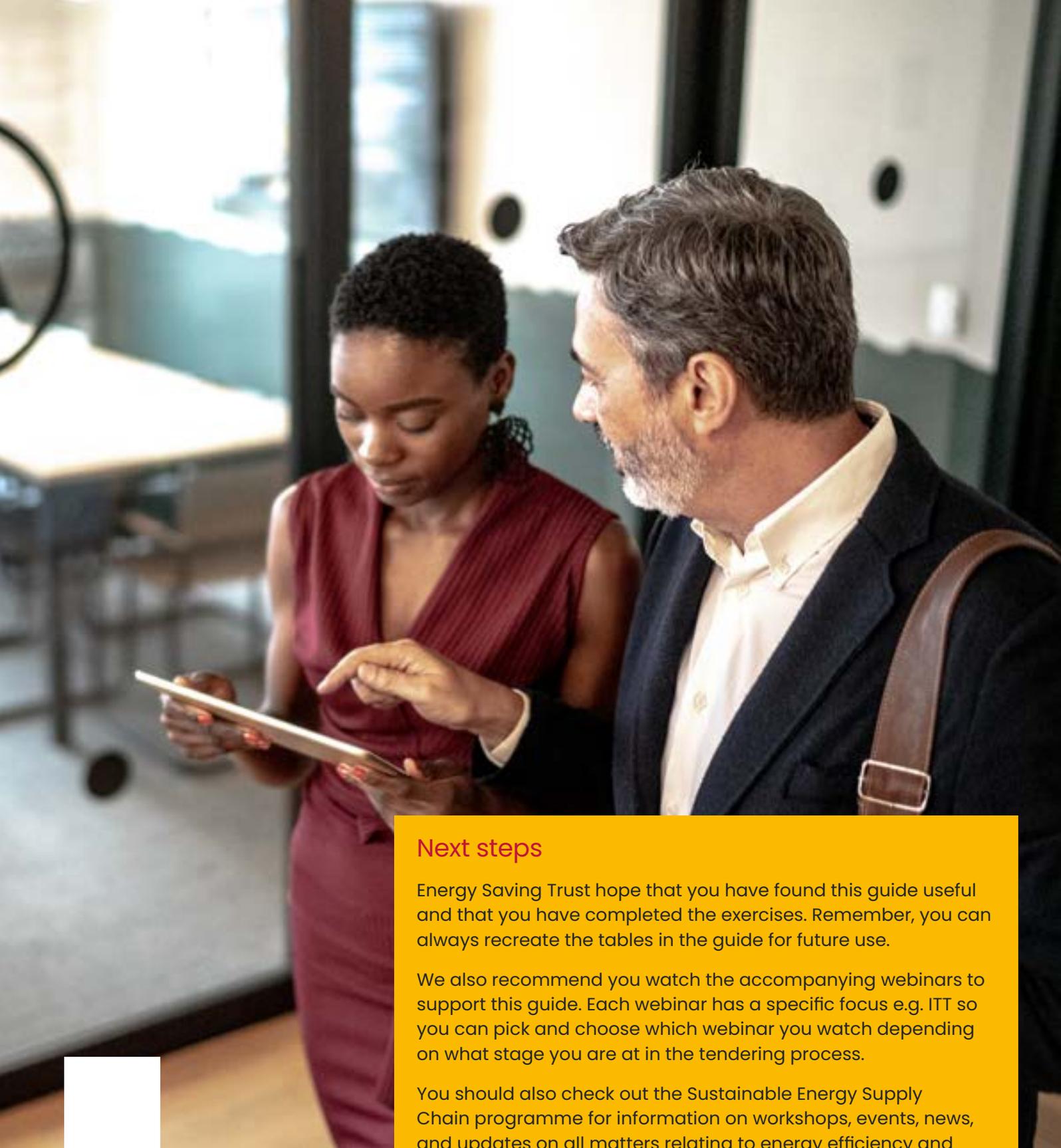
1. Treated unfairly
2. Discriminated against

You can challenge the outcome of a tender process if either of these things do occur.

This is not a decision that you would take lightly but it is a safety valve at the end of the process to test that fairness, equality and objectivity have been applied during the tender process and to the evaluation of each tender.

If you have any reservations about a tender process you are involved with then the Scottish Government has a confidential Single Point of Enquiry (SPoE) to refer any issues or concerns you may have.

The SPoE can change decisions that have been made unfairly or when mistakes have been made.



Next steps

Energy Saving Trust hope that you have found this guide useful and that you have completed the exercises. Remember, you can always recreate the tables in the guide for future use.

We also recommend you watch the accompanying webinars to support this guide. Each webinar has a specific focus e.g. ITT so you can pick and choose which webinar you watch depending on what stage you are at in the tendering process.

You should also check out the Sustainable Energy Supply Chain programme for information on workshops, events, news, and updates on all matters relating to energy efficiency and renewables for the supply chain in Scotland.

All the links for the above can be found in the useful website links section of this guide including online advice from the Scottish Government's Supplier Journey process and a wide range of related free training from the Supplier Development Programme including workshops, events and online resources and materials.

Good luck with all your bidding!

12.0

Checklist

Use this checklist to identify what you have already done and what you still need to do to set yourself up for success and for a specific tender exercise.

Table 21:
Checklist

#	Item	Description	Check
1	Finding Opportunities	PCS registration	
		Alert Profile set up	
		Quick Quotes registration	
		PCS-Tender activated and linked to PCS	
2	Bid Strategy	Is this a contract you are currently delivering?	
		How important is this contract to your business?	
		What is your approach to quality – meeting the specification?	
		How will you price this tender – low, fair, or higher price?	
3	Extended Profile	Quality policy	
		Health and safety policy	
		Environmental policy	
		Equality and diversity policy	
		Business continuity and disaster recovery	
		Accounts	
		Insurance certificates	
		Technical examples – how good a fit are you for this contract?	



#	Item	Description	Check
4	Technical Envelope	Value proposition	
		Contract specific requirements	
		Methodology	
		Project plan	
		Profiles for team	
		Risk assessment	
		Case studies or examples to illustrate key points	
5	Commercial Envelope	Core pricing	
		Pricing scenarios (what if?)	
6	Award	Feedback from unsuccessful bids	
		Consolidate feedback from different bids	
		Identify lessons learned and apply these to future bids	
		Vary bid tactics for next and future bids	



13.0 Useful websites

Procurement portals

Portal	URL
Public Contracts Scotland	publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk
PCS-Tender	publictendersscotland.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk
Contracts Finder (England)	gov.uk/contracts-finder
Sell2Wales	sell2wales.gov.uk
eSourcing Northern Ireland	e-sourcingni.bravosolution.co.uk

Scottish Government links

Reference	URL
Supplier Journey	supplierjourney.scot
Single point of enquiry	gov.scot/Topics/Government/Procurement/Selling/supplier-enquiries
Fair Work Practices Toolkit	gov.scot/publications/fair-work-practices-in-procurement-toolkit
Scottish Business Pledge	scottishbusinesspledge.scot

Resources and information

Organisation	URL
Webinar modules to help support this guide	energysavingtrust.org.uk/service/procurement-guide
Fair Work Practices Toolkit	gov.scot/publications/fair-work-practices-in-procurement-toolkit
Energy Saving Trust Sustainable Energy Supply Chain Programme	energysavingtrust.org.uk/business/energy-efficiency/support-for-supply-chain/
Home Energy Scotland loan scheme	energysavingtrust.org.uk/grants-and-loans/home-renewables-scotland/
Warmer Homes Scotland	warmworks.co.uk
Supplier Development Programme	sdpscotland.co.uk



The Supplier Journey is a Scottish Government website which provides guidance on how to bid for public sector contracts. Guidance is provided in a step by step “journey” format from preparing to bid, bidding for and managing the contract.

supplierjourney.scot



Supplier Development Programme (SDP) helps businesses that have little or no experience of tendering and are often too small to have dedicated bid/tender resources to contemplate bidding for public sector contracts. SDP aims to help such businesses become “tender ready” for contracts and improve their prospects. SDP delivers this support through a Programme of free training and events which can be booked via the SDP website.

sdpscotland.co.uk



Energy Saving Trust is one of the UK’s leading organisations set up to promote the sustainable and efficient use of energy. We provide impartial, accurate and authoritative advice on reducing carbon emissions for individuals and organisations and act as a bridge between government to consumers, trade, businesses, local authorities, and the energy market.

energysavingtrust.org.uk



SCMG were commissioned by Energy Saving Trust to produce this Procurement Guide for SMEs bidding for public sector tenders. SCMG ran the original workshops for Energy Saving Trust to engage with renewables and energy efficiency installers in identifying barriers to bidding for contracts. This guide is the first revision of the original guide to reflect the latest legislation and best practice.

scmg.co.uk

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