



Home Office

BUILDING A SAFE, JUST
AND TOLERANT SOCIETY

A Suppliers Guide

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

We have to rely on businesses, large and small, to help meet our public service commitments. We spend over £2 billion per annum on a wide range of goods and services so it is important that we achieve value for money in all our commercial dealings.

This booklet provides a brief overview of procurement in the Home Office and advises you how to go about doing business with us.

Further information is available on our website but if you have any queries regarding this guide you can email us at commercial_directorate@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

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1. Statement of Home Office purpose and aims

1.1. Purpose:

- To work with individuals and communities to build a safe, just and tolerant society;
- To support and mobilise communities;
- To deliver the Department's policies and responsibilities fairly, effectively and efficiently.

1.2. Aims:

- To reduce crime and the fear of crime;
- To reduce organised and international crime;
- To ensure the effective delivery of justice;
- To deliver effective custodial and community sentences to reduce reoffending and protect the public;
- To reduce the availability and abuse of dangerous drugs;
- To regulate entry to and settlement in the United Kingdom effectively in the interests of sustainable growth and social inclusion;
- To support strong and active communities in which people of all races and backgrounds are valued and participate on equal terms.

2. How procurement in the Home Office is organised

2.1. Our Commercial Directorate develops procurement strategy and policy. We have four teams with responsibility for the following main functions:

- Commercial strategy and development
- E-Business
- Strategic sourcing
- Major projects

2.2. Some core directorates with responsibility for specific business areas, and to our Executive Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) have devolved procurement authority.

2.3. Executive agencies are independent of the Home Office in their procurement activities but heads of procurement sit on a central Procurement Council.

3. What we buy

- 3.1. We buy a wide and diverse range of goods and services. This includes all of the things you would typically expect any large organisation to buy, such as stationery, office equipment, facilities management services, works, IT, and telecommunications. We also buy in professional services such as management consultancy, financial and legal services, and project management. Also a wide range of goods and services related to publicity, communications and research. The Immigration Service has its own unique service requirements for asylum seekers as does the Prison Service (now part of the National Offender Management Service) for custodial requirements.

4. Our commitment to achieving value for money

- 4.1. We have always been committed to awarding contracts to those suppliers who meet the full requirement and offer best value for money. We calculate this over the whole life of the contract. The Gershon Efficiency Review highlighted the need to achieve significant savings across Government and we will continue to put total lifecycle cost high up in the tender evaluation criteria.

5. Home Office procurement policy

- 5.1. We are required to procure all goods and services through fair and open competition whilst complying with the regularity framework set out in the EU Public Procurement Directives where applicable. The Directives do not cover all procurements but we must comply with the principles of the Treaty of Rome/accession Treaty. In essence this sets down principles and procedures to prevent discrimination against suppliers from any member state and to remove restrictions on moving goods and services freely.
- 5.2. We advertise all procurements that exceed the EU Public Procurement Directives thresholds (subject to periodic revision) in the supplement to the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) via a contract notice. The contract notice allows expressions of interest in any of the requirements advertised.
- 5.3. You can find information about the EU Public Procurement Directives and Regulations on the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) website: (<http://www.ogc.gov.uk/>)
- 5.4. It is not our policy to develop and use approved suppliers lists. You may, however, indicate an interest in supplying us by registering and completing a Pre-Assessment Questionnaire using the Home Office eSourcing service (www.homeoffice.bravosolution.com).

5.5. Prompt payment of invoices

5.5.1. We recognise the importance of cash flow to all suppliers, especially small companies. We have adopted the CBI Prompt Payers Code, and pay bills in accordance with the terms of the contract. Otherwise we pay within 30 calendar days of receipt of a valid invoice, or receipt of satisfactory goods or services, whichever is the later.

5.5.2. We have recently introduced a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system incorporating HR, finance and procurement. This requires a three-way match between purchase order, invoice, and goods received note. Invoices **MUST** include a Purchase Order Number. We cannot pay invoices without a Purchase Order Number.

5.5.3. You can help make sure we pay invoices promptly by checking the address is correct and that all other details are accurate, including the purchase order number. You must ensure you advise any changes to your details such as name, address or bank details. Keeping this up to date helps ensure prompt payment.

5.5.4. To help us pay quickly we use the Bankers Automated Clearing Service (BACS).

5.5.5. Our contracts include a clause expecting you to pay any sub-contractors promptly too.

5.6. Non Discrimination

5.6.1. In common with many other public bodies, we are subject to the general duty to (a) eliminate unlawful discrimination and (b) promote equality of opportunity. We will be mindful of those obligations when discharging our functions through others, and will consider the extent to which the procurement process ensures compliance.

5.7. Sustainable Development

5.7.1. We are committed to sustainable development and aim to improve our performance by:

- Encouraging manufacturers, suppliers and contractors, through tighter specifications, to develop environmentally preferable goods and services at competitive prices.
- Making sure that any products derived from wildlife, such as timber, plants and leather goods are from sustainable sources. They must also comply with EU and international trading rules such as CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species).
- Working with contractors to improve environmental performance where this is relevant to the contract and will give value for money.
- Meeting all statutory regulations and official codes of practice and specifying that contractors do the same when working on our premises.

5.8. Environmental impact of procurement

5.8.1. Procurement can have a very significant environmental impact. Our commitment to minimise this impact is reflected in our policies and the guidance followed by our suppliers and buyers. We make sure our buyers follow best practice by carrying out pilot projects or environmental audits of each operational area or function.

5.8.2. We take account of whole life costs and not just the initial price when assessing value for money. We specify recycled products where practicable and when they give value for money.

5.9. Labelling schemes

5.9.1. We use various labelling schemes to encourage suppliers to take environmental considerations into account. These include:

- The European Commission's mandatory energy labelling scheme. We give preference to the most energy efficient products where they give value for money, taking account of whole life costs.
- Environmental labels issued through recognised schemes to help identify environmentally preferable products (those with a low environmental impact over their life cycle).
- Using criteria already established under official Eco-labelling schemes (where available and relevant to the contract) to improve specifications for products and services.

5.10. Voluntary schemes

5.10.1. Procurement directives distinguish between products or services specific to a contract, and general processes and practices, which are not relevant to the procurement process. For example, we would not make it a general requirement when awarding a contract that suppliers comply with EMAS or ISO 14001, which are voluntary schemes for encouraging businesses to reduce their environmental impacts. However, these schemes are useful indicators of environmental performance and may be taken into account if relevant to the contract.

5.11. Propriety

5.11.1. Public Servants follow a strict code of procurement ethics. They and members of their families cannot accept gifts or offers of hospitality from individuals or organisations, which the Home Office has, or could have at some time in the future, a contractual relationship.

6. Procurement process

6.1. We aim to ensure all our requirements are met through fair and open competition. The extent of competition depends on the likely value of the contract. For low value items we may rely on telephone quotations only or use of the Government Procurement Card (GPC). Anything over £2,000 is subject to written quotations, and formal tenders over £10,000.

6.2. If we think a contract will exceed the thresholds set by the EU, we must follow the EU Public Procurement Directives. Whenever we invite a company to tender we:

- Specify our needs in terms of outputs whenever appropriate, to encourage innovation.
- Invite tenders from enough suppliers to ensure there is genuine competition.
- Make sure tendering procedures and documentation are as clear and concise as possible, and only ask for information necessary to evaluate bids.
- Inform all tenderers of the evaluation criteria on which the decision to award the contract will be based.
- Provide all tenderers with the same information and opportunity.

6.3. Submitting quotations and tenders

6.3.1. We use our own terms and conditions. They are referred to on purchase orders or provided with invitation to tender documentation. You must follow all tender instructions carefully. Failure to do so may invalidate your tender. In cases where the EU Negotiated procedure is used the terms and conditions are usually based on standard terms and conditions but the service schedules are subject to negotiation. We may choose to use eAuctions as a means of obtaining bids for particular requirements.

6.4. Electronic tendering

6.4.1. Our eSourcing Service provides a suite of collaborative, web-based tools that enable procurement professionals and suppliers to conduct the strategic activities of the procurement lifecycle over the internet. It provides a simple, secure and efficient means for managing tendering activities, reducing the time and effort required for both buyers and suppliers. For more information on this please visit www.homeoffice.bravosolution.com.

6.4.2. At present we maintain alternative trading routes with those suppliers who are not in a position to trade using the Internet but are nevertheless able to offer best value for money. This policy will be kept under review.

6.5. Evaluation of tenders

6.5.1. You will be advised what criteria will be used to evaluate bids if you are invited to tender. All tenders are assessed against the same criteria for any particular requirement. Your bid will be successful if it fully meets the requirement and offers the best value for money.

6.5.2. Contracts are awarded as soon as possible after the evaluation process has been completed. The current UK procurement Regulations are currently being amended to give effect to the European Court of Justice judgement in the Alcatel case. This requires a minimum of 10 calendar days mandatory standstill period between communicating an award decision to all tenderers and entering into a contractually binding agreement. An intention to accept letter is sent to the successful tenderer, subject to confirmation at the end of the 10 day standstill period. Letters of decline are sent to those that are unsuccessful.

6.6. Debriefing

6.6.1. We aim to ensure within the constraints of confidentiality that suppliers who ask are informed of the reasons for their bid being unsuccessful. Our objective is to comment constructively on the strengths and weaknesses of bids to enable suppliers to better compete for future work. We also encourage comment about any aspects of the tender process that may have been unclear or caused tenderers disproportionate effort.

7. **Contract terms and conditions**

7.1. Contracts in the Home Office will be in one of the following forms:

- Short form of contract with standard terms and conditions for low value goods and services. This is the most generally used form of contract. To view the short form standard terms and conditions for goods, services and consultancy visit (<http://commercial.homeoffice.gov.uk/doing-business/terms-and-conditions>).
- Long form of contract with standard terms and conditions for higher value contracts tailored to meet specific requirements.
- Framework Agreement (which includes OGC Buying Solutions, Scat, Gcat and “Catalyst” contracts) an agreement to provide goods or services over a fixed period at pre-agreed rates, ordered as and when required. Delivery may be to more than one designated location. There are no pre-agreed quantity levels.
- Call-off Contract – an agreement to provide goods or services over a fixed period at pre-determined quantity levels and at pre-agreed rates with scheduled delivery to one or more designated locations.
- Bespoke contracts for large scale, complex contracts.

8. **How to express an interest in supplying to us**

8.1. You can register on our eSourcing system. This includes a pre-assessment portal. For more information on the Home Office eSourcing service visit the eSourcing portal (www.homeoffice.bravosolution.com).

- 8.2. Look for opportunities to tender on the EU OJEU website (www.ted.eur-op.eu.int). This is an on-line data service provided by the EU that lists government requirements that exceed the EU Public Procurement Directive thresholds for public sector organisations across the European Union. The data is up-dated daily.
- 8.3. Look at *Government Opportunities* on www.govopps.co.uk

9. **Quality assurance**

- 9.1. We want to place contracts with suppliers whose quality control and product reliability is of a high standard. This enables us to reduce our own quality inspections to a minimum. During pre-tender assessment we look for evidence of a good quality control system, such as ISO 9000. Although formal certification to such standard is not usually mandatory, it will help if you can show that effective systems for quality control are used. You may be asked to produce relevant certificates.

10. **Opportunities for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Black Minority Ethnic Suppliers (BMEs), and the Voluntary and Community Sector(VCS).**

- 10.1. It is government policy to encourage SMEs, BMEs, and the VCS. We recognise the important contribution that they make to the economy and local communities. Our aim is to enhance opportunities for these organisations wherever possible. This has to be consistent with value for money and the need to treat all suppliers fairly.

- 10.2. Initiatives taken to help SMEs, BMEs and the VCS include:

- Simplification of procedures and documentation.
- Wherever practicable, at least one SME, BME or VCS supplier is included in each competition.
- Invoices are paid promptly (we pay within 30 calendar days of receipt of a valid invoice, or receipt of satisfactory goods or services, whichever is the later).
- Use of approved quality standards.

- 10.3. You can get more information on use of the Voluntary Sector from our booklet "[Think Smart – Think Voluntary Sector](#)"

11. **Suppliers employing the severely disabled**

- 11.1. In 1994 the Government introduced the Special Contracts Arrangement (SCA). This was to assist non-profit making suppliers and workshops within the European Union and European Economic Area, with severely disabled people making up more than 50% of the workforce, to compete for government business.

11.2. We receive a catalogue of products and services available from SCA suppliers and encourage their inclusion on tender lists where possible.

12. **Freedom of Information Act 2000**

12.1. The Freedom of Information Act gives any person of any nationality the right to have access to information about all public contracts and procurement activity held by public authorities. This is subject to certain conditions and exemptions such as those relating to commercial interests and information provided in confidence.

12.2. It is retrospective in that it applies to all information which is “held” by the public authority at the time a request is received. It also covers existing contracts and those which are competed.