



Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

How to do Business Guide

This document is a guide to potential suppliers on how to bid for TWFRS contracts and understand TWFRS procurement processes

1. ABOUT THIS GUIDE

- 1.1 This document has been developed to provide guidance to current and future suppliers on how to identify opportunities and bid for work with TWFRS. The guide provides information to suppliers on the procurement processes we use and how suppliers can get involved in bidding for our contracts.
- 1.2 We hope this guide will give businesses the awareness and knowledge of TWFRS procurement processes they need to build effective business relationships with us and to encourage as many businesses as possible, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), to apply for contracts.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 We provide a 999 emergency response service across Tyne and Wear to put out fires, rescue people from road traffic collisions and other incidents, and deal with major flooding. As well as providing an emergency response service, we provide advice and guidance to stop fires from happening in the first place.
- 2.2 We have 17 fire stations, a Service Headquarters and Training Centre in Washington and a Technical Services Centre in Gateshead.
- 2.3 Our Finance and Procurement Department is based at Service Headquarters in Washington and is responsible for procurement goods, services and works on behalf of the organisation.

3. PROCUREMENT IN TWFRS

- 3.1 We procure a diverse range of goods, services and works from a variety of suppliers. We rely on our suppliers to allow us to provide our services to the public of Tyne and Wear. The goods, services and works we procure provide companies of all sizes with a wide range of commercial opportunities. Your company could potentially benefit from these opportunities.
- 3.2 Listed below are some of the common categories of goods, services and works we procure:-
 - Fleet
 - Fire Fighting Equipment
 - Fire Safety Equipment
 - ICT Hardware
 - ICT Software
 - Property Repairs and Maintenance
 - Training
 - PPE and Uniform
 - Services (wide range)
- 3.3 The main objectives of our procurement processes are to procure fit for purpose solutions and achieve value for money. We have published a

[Procurement Strategy](#) where further information can be found regarding our procurement objectives. These objectives include securing indirect benefits such as supporting Equality and Diversity, Sustainability etc.

4. TRANSPARENCY

- 4.1 In accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code we currently publish all our spend data above £500 on our [website](#). In addition we also publish our Contract Register and further data relating to all our procurement processes above the value of £5,000 and our procurement card spend.
- 4.2 In addition to our e-tendering system, all procurement projects which are required to be advertised are published on our own website. This will allow suppliers to identify opportunities to work with us.
- 4.3 You can find copies of our standard terms and conditions for the purchase of both goods and services on our website.

5. SOURCING STRATEGY

- 5.1 Our Authority, in terms of third party expenditure, is relatively small in comparison to other Authorities within the North East. To achieve economies of scale we seek to use contracts available and appropriate for our use set up by other Purchasing Bodies. Collaborating with other organisations, whether on a regional or national basis is important to achieving our procurement objectives.
- 5.2 TWFRS are an Associate Member of the North East Purchasing Organisation (NEPO). We work in partnership with NEPO to procure goods, services and works using their contracts. We also work closely with the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) and use their contracts where beneficial.
- 5.3 We also work with our neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services to identify opportunities to procure goods, services and works together.
- 5.4 Where collaborative contracts are not available or do not meet our requirements we procure ourselves. Our Procurement Officers invite appropriately qualified and experienced suppliers to bid for our work. Where beneficial or where legislation dictates we advertise our requirements to the marketplace and invite quotations or tenders.
- 5.5 We do not maintain an approved list of suppliers.

6. RULES AND REGULATIONS

- 6.1 All public sector procurers have important legislation they must comply with. TWFRS are no different, we design our procurement processes to ensure compliance with this legislation.
- 6.2 In addition we also have our own internal rules called Standing Orders and Financial Regulations which we must also comply with. Our Standing Orders and Financial Regulations set out the processes that must be followed to identify a preferred supplier and the governance processes we must then follow to award a contract to that preferred supplier.
- 6.3 Detailed below is a brief overview of the procurement processes we follow dependent upon the estimated value of the contract:-

Estimated Contract Value	Procurement Process
Below £5,000	Individual Budget Holders raise purchase orders ensuring value for money is achieved.
Between £5,000 and £50,000	Requests for quotation will be issued to a number of suitably qualified and experienced suppliers The requirement may be advertised where appropriate
Between £50,000 and £164,175	Invitations to tender will be issued to a number of suitably qualified and experienced suppliers The requirement will be advertised.
Above £164,175	A full EU tender process will be followed The requirement will be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU)

- 6.4 In addition to the table above there are a number of different and specific processes we can use to procure our requirements. The two most common processes used are the Open Process and the Restricted Process. The Open Processes allows all suppliers who have expressed an interest to submit a tender (a one stage process). The Restricted Process requires suppliers to submit a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ). The PQQs will then be evaluated to draw up a shortlist of suppliers that will then be invited to tender. We select the appropriate process dependent upon what it is we are going to procure.
- 6.5 We have a set of Standard Conditions of Contract for goods and services. It is our policy to contract under our terms and conditions of contract.
- 6.6 We award contracts on the basis of Lowest Cost or Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) principle

7. OUR E-TENDERING SYSTEM

- 7.1 We use an e-tendering system called Bluelight. Our procurement processes above the value of £5,000 will be facilitated using this system following one of the processes set out within the table above. Where appropriate we will also advertise our requirements on this system.
- 7.2 The Bluelight e-tendering system is used by the majority of Emergency Services. We would encourage all supplier to register free of charge using this system. Further information, including access to user guides can be found by [clicking here](#) or accessing the website below. Please also find attached a guide for registration with the Bluelight e-tendering system.

8. HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- 8.1 Suppliers should register with the Bluelight e-tendering system. The system will notify them of opportunity to work with TWFRS and other Emergency services as and when they arise. Please find attached a guide which provides registration instructions and a link below:-

www.bluelight.gov.uk

- 8.2 Suppliers can make contact with TWFRS Finance and Procurement Department by emailing procurement@twfire.gov.uk providing information about their company and that they sell.
- 8.3 Suppliers can review the TWFRS contract register to identify when requirements are likely to be re-tendered and prepare accordingly. TWFRS Contract Register can be accessed by [selecting this link](#).
- 8.4 Suppliers can monitor the Current Opportunities section of our website to identify contracting opportunities as they arise by [selecting this link](#).
- 8.5 Suppliers are encouraged to work with other Purchasing Bodies including NEPO and CCS. TWFRS often use such contracts to procure their goods, services and works. Further information regarding these organisations, including how to work with them can be found from the following websites:-

NEPO - www.qtegov.com

CCS – <http://ccs.cabinetoffice.gov.uk>

9. WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US

- 9.1 We follow the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) Code of Ethics. All suppliers are treated equally, fairly and without bias. Our procurement documentation and processes are open and transparent. Our procurement documentation clearly sets out our supplier selection processes at the start of any procurement project.

9.2 We proactively work to remove any barriers that prevent suppliers bidding for work with us. We strive to ensure our procurement processes are proportionate, inclusive and as simple as possible to follow.

10. WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU

10.1 We wish to work with the best suppliers who can help us achieve our procurement objectives and deliver an effective and efficient service to the public. We expect our suppliers to work in a professional manner and bid for our contracts where they are suitably qualified and experienced to do so.

10.2 Our procurement documentation provides clear instruction to suppliers and includes what information suppliers are asked to provide when bidding for contracts. We expect our suppliers to follow these instructions carefully paying particular attention to the method of submitting quotations/tenders and the deadline set.

11. SUPPLIER FEEDBACK

11.1 We are committed to offering bidders meaningful feedback on their submissions and recognise that by doing so:-

- It helps suppliers to know in which areas they need to improve in future to make them more competitive.
- It helps us to improve and develop our processes, and to become more familiar with the market.
- It is good practice and helps to improve our relationships with suppliers.

All feedback offered will be detailed and meaningful, however commercially sensitive information about other bidders will not be disclosed.

12. CONTACT DETAILS AND CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES

12.1 Further information regarding this guide or current business opportunities can be sought from emailing the address or address below:-

procurement@twfire.gov.uk

Finance and Procurement Department
Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
Service Headquarters
Nissan Way
Washington
Tyne and Wear
SR5 3QY

12.2 Current TWFRS opportunities can be found by [clicking on this link](#) or accessing the Bluelight e-tendering system.