

**Fixed Telephony Services Supplier Event**  
**15 July 2009**  
**Q & A**

**1) Buying Solutions currently take a supplier commission as part of their funding model. Will Procurement Scotland frameworks operate in the same way?**

Procurement Scotland is currently funded centrally, with no charge to either customers or suppliers. Given increasing budgetary restraints, it is possible that this may be reviewed in the future, but for the moment there are no costs to access our frameworks.

**2) Will the framework have one supplier per product category, or multiple suppliers?**

This will be a multi-supplier framework, with all suppliers capable of supplying all the 'in scope' products/services.

**3) Are you putting a limit on the number of organisations which will be selected for the framework, or will anyone who meets the criteria in the ITT be included?**

It should be noted that a framework is not an approved vendor list. In order to have a fair and efficient framework, there must be a limit on the number of suppliers, and we envisage a total of 5 suppliers on the framework.

**4) If many suppliers pass the criteria in the ITT, how are the successful 5 selected? Will the biggest/safest organisations be chosen?**

The evaluation criteria and weightings will be made very clear in the documentation, as will the guidelines for scoring responses. Supplier selection will be based on these criteria, with the top scoring suppliers being awarded a place on the framework.

**5) How will you decide on multi suppliers if a sole supplier offers a tariff which would be the best pricing option for all bodies?**

The open and competitive tendering process will allow Procurement Scotland to assess and evaluate responses and award entry to the framework to successful suppliers. The decision on which supplier(s) will be awarded the business will be determined by the outcome from the comparator tool for "Direct Purchase" or as the outcome of a mini-competition conducted by the client.

**6) Is it worth anyone except large suppliers bidding alone?**

It is up to suppliers to judge their own capability, and decide whether or not it would be best to bid alone or to partner with other organisations. Whatever the model used (single bidder, consortia, strategic partnership etc.), capability to supply the contract must be robustly

demonstrated. To be clear, all bids will be evaluated fairly and transparently based on published evaluation criteria. Given the Scottish Government's clear economic agenda, we would however encourage suppliers to consider innovative supply chain bids in order to offer robust, value add services – for example larger suppliers partnering with smaller or local providers or smaller providers partnering with other smaller or larger suppliers.

**7) Is it possible to bid both as part of a consortium and as a lead or individual organisation?**

Yes, there is nothing in the EU regulations which prevents you from doing this. You may bid as part of a consortia, as an individual or as part of a supply chain to spread your chances of success.

**8) How long will the framework be in place for?**

2 years, with the option to extend for up to a further 2 years.

**9) Will each supplier on the framework have to be capable of supplying all of the in scope services?**

Yes, as a minimum those elements that are identified as mandatory must be supplied.

**10) Will housing associations be able to access the framework?**

All registered social landlords in Scotland will be able to access the framework.

**11) Can you describe how the process will work when an organisation chooses to utilise the framework?**

As shown in the presentation, there are two possible routes to purchase from the framework – direct purchase, and further/mini competition.

The direct purchase route will operate in a similar way to the current model used by Buying Solutions. Organisations will input their requirements and profile into a comparator tool, which will then indicate which of the suppliers on the framework offers best value. The organisations will then purchase directly from this supplier.

**12) Can non-Scottish bodies use the framework?**

No. In accordance with legal advice, our contract notices specify very clearly who can access our frameworks, and this is largely limited to Scottish public bodies. There are a few exceptions for bodies such as the Scottish Parliament and the Student Loans Company, and these are named explicitly in the contact notice. UK public sector bodies which have a presence in Scotland (such as the MoD or DWP) cannot access our frameworks.

**13) Once the Procurement Scotland framework is in place, will organisations have to use it, or will they be free to continue to use other frameworks such as those offered by Buying Solutions?**

Use of Procurement Scotland frameworks is not mandatory, and we recognise that other frameworks exist and will continue to be used. However, where Procurement Scotland frameworks offer best value, there is an expectation that organisations would have to be able to justify not utilising them.

**14) Is there room for creative/innovative responses in the PQQ, and will this gain credit?**

At the PQQ stage, alternate or innovative approaches can be slightly problematic as they are hard to evaluate – the process is backwards facing, designed to examine current capability to supply the in scope products and services in a way which can be easily compared. However, there is certainly the opportunity to demonstrate where you have shown innovative and creative approaches in the delivery of previous contracts. The ITT stage will offer more scope for this, and will outline what scope there is for suppliers to submit “variant” bids. Please note that bids must be compared on the basis of the agreed scope and evaluation criteria in line with the ITT.

The scoring methodology and guidelines for both the PQQ and ITT will be made clear.

**15) How will Corporate Social Responsibility be reflected in the PQQ and ITT?**

There are a number of areas in both the PQQ and ITT which look at CSR, but we cannot discuss details of these at the moment.

**16) Buying Solutions had some problems with the comparator. For example, minimum call charges and connections charges in particular make it hard to compare like for like, without possessing and inputting all relevant call records. How will Procurement Scotland deal with this?**

We are aware of the issues which have been encountered by Buying Solutions, and are working to improve the process where necessary and learn from their experience. Part of the ITT evaluation will focus on the charges for the services provided through the framework. A sample usage volume will be used to test the costs that could be incurred and therefore the viability of the tariffs being offered.

**17) With the comparator tool, an organisation could get a “net” highest score with one supplier, but potentially get lower costs by splitting up their requirements – how will this be dealt with?**

It is recognised that Clients will decide how best to utilise the services offered through the framework. We will assist by providing an open and fair price comparator tool for the services offered.

**18) If an organisation wants to keep line rental with one supplier, while moving to another within the framework for voice calls, how will this work?**

This is possible, and it would be up to individual organisations to decide if they wanted to proceed in this way. However, we would be surprised if this was a common practice, given the increased administration and contract management involved.

**19) How will Procurement Scotland stop successful suppliers using their position on the framework to gain business in other areas**

We have been very clear on the scope of this framework and there will be an expectation on both Scottish public bodies and suppliers to adhere to the terms and conditions of the framework. Performance will be monitored as part of the contract management process which will be put in place once the framework agreement has been established and feedback will be requested from local organisations. Organisations utilising the framework agreement are responsible for ensuring compliance with EU Regulations.

**20) How granular will Service Level Agreements (SLAs) be? Will faults/resolution times, for example, be covered?**

We don't want to stifle innovation in service areas, and while we will make our expectations clear with regards to the minimum items that we expect to be measured, we will avoid setting minimum service levels. Suppliers will be given the opportunity to demonstrate how they are able to offer innovative and distinctive solutions and the associated provision of service.

**21) You mentioned that suppliers will be required to report on service levels. Will these reports be publicly available? Also, will these be compiled on a client by client basis, or aggregated?**

We have a standard reporting model which we will expect to be completed, both for us and each client. This will not be published, although the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act obviously applies. Some commercially sensitive information will be shared with customers as necessary for the operation of the framework.

**22) How much of the total category A spend is in the telecoms category?**

Approximately £200m is spent overall on telecoms products and services annually by the Scottish public bodies. However, it should be noted that our spend data is currently very high level, and depends on the accurate classification of the business areas of suppliers – this figure is indicative only and obviously includes products and services beyond the scope of the current fixed telephony framework.

**23) Will solutions such as hosted voice or centrex be allowed, given that provision of PBX equipment is explicitly out of scope?**

They will be considered as means of supplying voice services according to the scope of the current exercise, although it should be noted that there are currently commercial and technical issues associated with such solutions for single lines. We are not currently contracting for the wider technology/hosted solutions space but this will be addressed in future planned national frameworks.

**24) With broadband not in scope, are full Local Loop Unbundling (LLU) solutions/providers (suppliers who would unbundle everything) effectively prevented from bidding?**

Broadband based voice solutions are possible, as long as suppliers can meet the mandatory in scope requirements for the provision of voice connectivity. As for broadband itself, we are not looking at data provision and connectivity at the moment (although this will likely be included in a future project). The main focus of the current Fixed Telephony framework is on the provision of voice calls and lines.

To confirm if the primary product being offered is the supply of voice services across the broadband element, as opposed to the voice channel through the broadband splitter, then it is possible to offer this as a product.

**25) You mentioned that the Procurement Scotland utilities contract is getting 90%+ take up – is this with a single supplier?**

Yes.

It should be noted that there is no fixed Procurement Scotland approach – each commodity/category of products is looked at independently, and the most appropriate procurement route chosen. This may involve utilising an existing framework (e.g. Buying Solutions), and where we do set up a Scottish framework, varying approaches including single or multiple supplier, regional lotting, products lotting etc.

So far, sign up rates to Procurement Scotland frameworks have been high, and we expect similar success with this framework. However, we are aware of some bodies who will not be accessing our framework at this point due to other arrangements in place, for example those with outsourcing deals.

**26) What other telecoms contracts/frameworks are Procurement Scotland working on, and when will these be active?**

We are currently starting to look at the technology solutions/converged solutions area. Stakeholder and supplier engagement is underway, and will continue throughout this year. It

is too early at this stage to state what form any eventual collaborative procurement exercise will take, or when this would be in place.

In mobile telephony, we have worked with Buying Solutions to ensure that their framework (which went live in January) met our needs. At the moment, we expect most organisations to utilise this framework on an individual basis.

Telecoms hardware is also being examined as a possible future project.

**27) The NHS currently have a contract in place covering similar services – how will this impact on the Procurement Scotland framework?**

We are obviously aware of the NHS contract, which is a broader technology solutions framework, and are not expecting many NHS bodies to utilise the Procurement Scotland framework. However, we are working with NHS National Procurement to ensure that full collaboration will be possible in future telecoms procurements.

**28) Will the Procurement Scotland framework supersede the NHS contract, and that being put in place by APUC for universities and colleges?**

The scope of the current Procurement Scotland framework and the current NHS and evolving APUC frameworks are different. As mentioned earlier, use of the Procurement Scotland framework is not mandatory, and we expect use of alternate frameworks to continue where this offers best value. However, we are working with both APUC and NHS National Procurement to ensure collaboration in the longer term in the 'technology solutions' space.