

Selling to Nottinghamshire County Council

A guide for contractors and suppliers

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1. Our contracts

At Nottinghamshire County Council we spend approximately £200million per annum with 18,000 external suppliers and contractors who do business with us. Our expenditure includes the purchase of 20,000 tonnes of rock salt to grit the county's icy roads, over 3,000 mobile phones for staff, and 900 uniforms for homecare workers. Our goods, works and services contracts range from fixed-term to one-off.

As the demand for more goods, works and services increases, so does the competition for business and for the quality of purchases. The introduction of new Government legislation means that both councils and businesses are expected to comply with procedures that will result in better procurement.

To ensure that suppliers and contractors are in a good position to do business with us we have developed this guide.

Listed below are examples of contractors and suppliers we do business with:

- international and UK companies
- SMEs (small and medium enterprises) – businesses employing 250 people or less
- social enterprises
- voluntary and community organisations.

The list below demonstrates the diversity of purchases by our departments.

Goods:

- paper for copiers and office use
- office furniture and equipment
- computer hardware and software
- mobile phones
- vehicles
- clothing.

Works:

- property maintenance
- construction contracts
- engineering.

Services:

- consultancy
- external printing
- agency staff
- advertising
- insurance.

(Note: the above list is not exhaustive)

2. Opportunities and processes for contractors and suppliers

We usually select contractors through advertising contracts and invite businesses to either submit tenders or to express interests in tendering for contracts. To ensure that businesses are made aware of our contracts, we generally advertise the County Council procurement requirements in European local and national media, the most frequently used are:

- Tenders Electronic Daily (Ted) Publication: <http://ted.publication.eu.int>
- Nottinghamshire County Council website: <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/home/business-economy/doingbusinesswithnottinghamshirecountycouncil.htm>

When selecting a supplier or contractor, we will often consider the following:

- previous experience and performance (quality assurance, references)
- technical and resource capacity
- 'whole-life' costs (not necessarily the cheapest at the time of supply)
- social/community impact (benefits to local people, equality)
- environmental impact (such as fuel efficiency and replacement lifetimes)
- other factors to suit our needs

When we have a regular need for goods, works and services, they are usually purchased through contracts that are in place for a period of time. This is beneficial to suppliers as it stabilises or increases the volume of business and cash flow. It gives us peace of mind that our traders are credible as they meet our requirements and will provide best value or value for money.

We set specific response times for suppliers to prepare and submit their offers. This is usually a minimum of ten to 52 working days depending on procedure.

best value:

- imposes a legal duty on all local authorities to continuously improve the services they provide, having regard to a combination of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- having a duty to provide the optimum combination of 'whole-life' costs and benefits to meet the customer requirement.

value for money:

- combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness - having the right goods or services at the right quality, in the right place, at the right time.
- the combination of cost, over the whole life of a project, and quality which best meets an organisation's requirements.

'whole-life' costs:

- considering quality, long-term cost, benefits as well as initial price, for example thinking about cost, environmental

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

We aim to encourage the county's small and medium enterprises to meet our specifications so they are on an equal par with other traders to conduct business with us. We cannot guarantee any supplier future business or discriminate in favour of Nottinghamshire businesses during any procurement. However, we would like to break down any barriers that small traders may be experiencing in doing business with us. For more information contact our skills, enterprise & business support team, details are listed in the contacts section.

Questionnaires: Businesses are expected to undertake an accreditation process or complete a pre-qualification or company questionnaire to assess their suitability to undertake business with the County Council.

Contract award: Prior to a contract being tendered, a contract information notice is published on our Nottinghamshire County Council website www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/home/business-economy/doingbusinesswithnottinghamshirecountycouncil.htm.

Once a contract has been awarded both successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified. Tender awards will also be published on the internet. Feedback is available on request to help unsuccessful suppliers and contractors improve their prospects of winning future contracts.

Contract management and monitoring: The County Council will monitor the progress of contracts throughout their lifetime. This ensures that the standard of services provided on our behalf, are being met.

- For works contracts – this will involve regular communication with a contract administrator and submission of activity records.
- For suppliers and services contracts – an officer will be designated to monitor performance of the contractor.

Electronic procurement (e-procurement)

An e-procurement team has been set up to assist contracted traders to join the electronic marketplace and buyers to purchase online. These experts will establish projects that enable suppliers and purchasers to reduce costs associated with the procurement process and the cost of normal commercial trading. For example, through electronic ordering, invoicing, payment, catalogues, and auctions. Some of these are partially in place and others are in the process of being set up. Suppliers and contractors may be asked to comply with these.

3. Procurement policies and procedures

Procurement and equality of opportunity: The County Council takes a proactive approach to its obligations arising from Section 71 of the Race Relations (Amendment Act) 2000. It is essential that all organisations wishing to provide services on behalf of the County Council are able to demonstrate that they take all reasonably practicable steps to allow equal access and equal treatment in employment and service delivery for all. Failure to comply with this policy could make the County Council, individuals and companies liable to legal action. Feedback will be available on request for those suppliers who do not meet the equal opportunity requirements.

Procurement and the Environment: At Nottinghamshire County Council we are committed to protecting and enhancing the environment for present and future generations. We want to reduce the environmental impact of purchasing goods, works and services. We will, so far as is reasonably practicable, achieve this by introducing environmental considerations into our procurement processes and contracts, and by raising staff awareness. Environmental considerations are consistent with our need to demonstrate best value, as best value seeks to achieve the optimum combination of 'whole-life' costs and benefits to meet the County Council's needs. We will also be working with our suppliers and contractors by encouraging them to work towards similar environmental goals.

Procurement and community benefits: The County Council is committed to using procurement to contribute to the regeneration of Nottinghamshire. We will do this by ensuring that where practicable the money we spend on procuring goods, works and services benefits the people, communities and economy of the county. To realise regeneration benefits through procurement we will Support Nottinghamshire-based small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and build community benefit clauses, also called social clauses, into our procurement contracts.

Procurement and health & safety: The County Council has obligations and responsibilities to staff to ensure health, safety and welfare at work. It has a statutory duty to provide a safe place to work and a healthy working environment for all of its employees, including those employed on a temporary basis. In certain circumstances, a broadly similar duty exists towards those persons who, whilst not being employees, are engaged to provide services for the the County Council. This category includes, but is not limited to, voluntary workers, consultants, contractors and agency staff. The general duties imposed on the County Council are defined in various legal requirements such as the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA): Nottinghamshire County Council, along with other authorities, is subject to the provisions of the FOIA. If a supplier or contractors considers that any information supplied to us is either commercially sensitive or confidential in nature, this should be highlighted and the reasons for its sensitivity given. In such cases the relevant material will, in response to FOIA requests, be examined in the light of the exemptions provided for in the FOIA.

Confidential nature of tender documentation and bids:

- Tender documentation shall be treated as private and confidential by tenderers.
- Tenderers shall not disclose that they have been invited to bid, or discuss the bid they are about to make, or canvass for its acceptance, other than with professional advisers who need to be consulted.
- In particular, bids shall not be canvassed or discussed with any other tenderer, or councillor, or officer of the Council.

Local Government Act 2003: The County Council is obliged to comply with The Local Government Act. This places a duty on every council to purchase goods, services and works using Best Value principles.

European Union public purchasing directives: All supplies and services contracts with a total value greater than £139K (approximately) must be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) and local and national media. All works contracts greater than £3.4 million (approximately) must also be advertised via OJEU, as well as local and national media.

Nottinghamshire County Council's own financial regulations: These determine how money should be spent and regulations may apply to individual tenders or contracts. The County Council's financial regulations state that all contracts estimated to exceed £25,000 must go to tender.

4. Useful contacts

- **Corporate procurement unit**

The unit provides specialist support to Nottinghamshire County Council in all tasks relating to the purchasing of goods, works and services, and contractual arrangements. Please note that 'Selling to Nottinghamshire' and other guidance will also be available on the County Council internet at <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/home/business-economy/doingbusinesswithnottinghamshirecountycouncil.htm>

address: Nottinghamshire County Council, County Hall, West Bridgford, NG2 7QT.
tel: +44 (0)115 977 2745
fax: +44 (0)115 977 2353
e-mail: corporateprocurement@nottscc.gov.uk

- **e-procurement team**

The team promotes the business-to-business purchase and sale of supplies and services over the internet.

address: Nottinghamshire County Council, County Hall, West Bridgford, NG2 7QT.
tel: +44 (0)115 9774859
fax: +44 (0)115 977 2353
e-mail: eprocurement@nottscc.gov.uk

- **Sustainability team**

The team can provide advice to local businesses regarding environmental matters that may affect successful applications to tender.

address: Communities Department, Trent Bridge House, Fox Road, West Bridgford, NG2 6BJ.
tel: +44 (0)115 977 3145
fax: +44 (0)115 977 4054

- **Corporate equality officer**

This officer provides specialist information on equality related matters that may affect successful applicants to tender. There are a number of equality officers dealing with specialist areas.

address: Chief Executives, Nottinghamshire County Council, County Office, County Hall, West Bridgford, NG2 7QP.
tel: +44 (0)115 977 4438
fax: +44 (0)115 977 3030