

Supplier Event Day 28th November 2024

Workshop – Procurement Reform

❖ **Topic: Increased Transparency**

Questions:

1. Is there any risk regarding the transition period to the new processes/systems and how will these be managed, i.e. missed Notices/ PIN's?

The transition to the Procurement Act 2023 may create risks like missed notices or procedure errors. To mitigate these, the Central Digital Platform will streamline access, and be supported by learning resources, some of which we have provided on the last page.

It is important that suppliers register on the new Central Digital Platform when advised it is now live. If you do not register by 24th February 2025, you will miss new notices advising you of new tender opportunities.

2. Is there any training available to suppliers on the Procurement Act 2023 and its impact?

Central Government have provided various useful links to support with the changes and there will be webinars and further guidance issued in the coming weeks. Gov.uk have also now published a set of supplier [learning modules](#) on the Act for all to access.

3. What and where communication and update will be available on the transition period?

Guidance on the transition period is provided by Central Government. These are done via:

The Gov.uk websites:

[Procurement Act 2023: short guides - GOV.UK](#)

[Procurement Act 2023 - Guidance documents - GOV.UK](#)

Suppliers can also register for updates with [UKAEA](#) and [TPP](#) websites.

4. If a company has various entities, can they register each one separately on the Central Digital Platform?

Yes, if they are different legal entities, they can register each entity separately on the Central Digital Platform.

5. Are there options for connecting with the Procurement team and discussing opportunities?

Whilst we are unable to offer individual meetings with procurement team members due to capacity. We do offer regular supplier events; issue a regular newsletter and we aim to issue a notice to the market before any tender is issued – this enables a supplier to provide us with information and potentially meet with us before a tender is issued. This process is known as the Prior Information Notice (PIN stage). We also welcome any questions, suggestions, or feedback. You can do this via supplychain@ukaea.uk or procurement@ukaea.uk.

6. Are there any opportunities for suppliers to meet each other and collaborate?

There are sector forums and organisations – such as the Federation of Small Businesses – and various Chamber of Commerce organisations also hold events. Other public sector organisations also hold Meet the Buyer events to meet suppliers.

7. What is the single place suppliers need to be registered to, to capture and be aware of opportunities to work with UKAEA?

Information on upcoming and probable new procurements at UKAEA can be found on our published procurement pipeline - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukaea-procurement-pipeline>.

All tender opportunities are advertised on EU Supply, Contracts Finder, or Find a Tender. You can also set up alerts based on CPV (Common Procurement Vocabulary) codes on each system. Once set up you will be notified when we publish a tender using the CPV codes (categories of expenditure) that are of interest to your business.

The new Central Digital Platform (CDP) will replace Find a Tender and Contracts Finder once the new Procurement Act is live. This will serve as the single place suppliers need to sign up to stay informed about opportunities for work.

8. What are the key changes that the suppliers need to be aware of or prepare for, in advance of the change?

Please see answer to question 2 - the guidance documents published by the Government provides details about changes that suppliers should be aware of. In addition, we will send out email updates via to all suppliers registered for our newsletter as new guidance is issued.

9. How will the Central Digital Platform work with consortiums? How would they register?

The lead member of the consortium should be the contact for any consortium tender and state the structure of the consortia bidding for any opportunity. We will require the lead bidder to provide details of all members of the consortia. More details on the registration process for consortium tender submissions should be published closer to February 2025

❖ **Topic: Small and Medium Enterprises**

Questions:

10. Could there be support for grant writing/bid teams? Support in streamlining and writing bids?

Unfortunately, this cannot be provided, however, we do try to give as much advice in our tender documents as possible to make it easier for bidders to respond. During a tender process we also offer the opportunity to ask clarification questions if anything in the tender is unclear.

We provide unsuccessful bidders with feedback to help them in completing future tender submissions.

11. Has the definition of SME's changed under the new regulations?

Under the 2023 Act, SMEs are stated to be suppliers that have fewer than 250 staff and have a turnover of an amount less than or equal to £44 million, or a balance sheet total of an amount less than or equal to £38 million. The title SME also now includes Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE).

12. Suppliers raised concern over flexibility and loss of certainty of knowing the processes for different organisations, and general SME visibility. Is there anything UKAEA can do to support with this?

The new changes are designed to streamline the processes for suppliers, which should create more certainty and visibility.

13. Timing - over the next 1- 4 years, there are a lot of big changes happening at UKAEA (big packages of work through fusion futures w/ budget, significant changes to commercial function and obvious key activities that will establish UKAEA direction within fusion and set the direction), and with reforms taking place at the same time there is perhaps greater risk of not quite covering everything, things changing, not quite having all processes under reforms thought out fully the first time and there was a little hesitancy around this. Is there anything UKAEA can do to support and keep SMEs informed?

The changes to the Procurement Act and the new reforms are out of the control of UKAEA. The new Procurement Act is, however, expected to streamline the processes for the suppliers, and hopefully this will help prepare bidders for the new opportunities. We will keep all suppliers registered for our supply chain newsletter regularly updated to help them prepare for the changes.

14. Suppliers have expressed a preference to keep processes as standard as possible and give time and care to the changes. SME's have been given limited time to research and time to prepare bids is a challenge, and flexibility/constant changes can add to this. Are there options for workshops on how procurement will be run?

Central Government will be offering webinars in January 2025 on the new processes, in addition to the guidance that is available as per question 3 of this sheet and at the bottom of this page. The new act has reduced the number of tender processes and allows for some flexibility to design the process around the type of requirement. Bidders should see greater standardisation in documents and a reduction of forms because of the implementation of the Central Digital Platform (CDP).

15. Are there options for reducing the volume of forms?

Please see answer above. The Central Digital Platform will replace the Selection Questionnaire (SQ). However, you must keep your information up to date.

16. Is there a possibility for more frequent updates on the pipeline, i.e. monthly? The current one contains a lot of aspirational opportunities, and these do not reflect what tends to happen and tenders still appear without much time for preparation.

Aspirational tender opportunities are added as a guide to potential interested organisations that these may become future tenders. In addition, for all our tenders, we do also put out a prior information notice (PIN) which must be available to bidders for at least 30 days before a tender

is issued. Where we know an aspirational tender is going to be released, we move it to the Tender pipeline as soon as possible.

With the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023, all notices including advance notices will be published via the Central Digital Platform.

17. Could UKAEA clarify Social Value models? What works, and how SME's can give good examples? Will there be any favouring of local UK manufacturing, i.e. linking to less emissions?

There is guidance provided under National Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) for Social Value, please see guidance (aimed at local governments) at this link: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/procurement-hub/national-procurement-strategy/toolkit-social-value-achieving-community>. Many organisations now produce a report and plans to reduce their carbon impact. The range of information in the attached link could be used to create, develop a range of social value activities you might offer as part of any future tender submission.

18. It is sometimes hard to meet Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion targets without “Positive Discrimination” i.e. In Engineering. Is there anything UKAEA can do to support with this?

The Social Value model may be of help in this regard.

The links below may be useful.

[Positive action in the workplace - GOV.UK](#)

[NHS England » NHS equality, diversity, and inclusion improvement plan](#)

19. Has UKAEA considered the use of AI in the tender process, this could be used to improve efficiency, help SMEs with Limited resources, proof reading, meeting word count requirements. Are there any limits or plans to tackle this?

Bidders can use AI in their tender submission but should state that it has been used. It is the responsibility of the bidder to ensure the information provided in the tender is accurate and appropriate for the tender they are submitting.

20. Facilitating sub-contractor opportunities, would benefit from local business. i.e. Oxfordshire areas. Can UKAEA do more to support SMEs that make up small proportion of supply chain? Can we support and facilitate opportunities to engage with sub-contractors and consortiums?

You may find that there are sector forums and organisations – such as the Federation of Small Businesses may be able to help. Local councils also host ‘Meet the Buyer’ events. We do publicise details of all our contracts. Suppliers can use this information to make contact the tier 1 suppliers to discuss becoming their sub supplier in future contracts.

21. Can UKAEA put in place specific scopes, less technical terminology? Sometimes vagueness of opportunities, budget confirmation etc. Is enough to put SMEs off bidding for work.

We recognise that it is important to make our specifications clear and unambiguous to help bidders. If there is a tender you are interested in and a requirement or other aspect is unclear, bidders should raise a clarification question and ask for more detail.

22. For example, SMEs have been excluded from tenders for not being able to provide pass/fail criteria that outside of UKAEA processes does not apply to them. i.e. modern slavery statements. Can UKAEA incorporate flexibility in these scenarios going forward?

As part of the selection stage of any over-threshold tender a bidder is currently required to complete the Selection Questionnaire. In most cases bidders do not need to submit any supporting evidence. This is required only of the successful bidder before finalisation of the award.

In relation to modern slavery, if a bidder with a turnover of less than £36 million they do not need to have a Modern Slavery Statement. This would not be the reason for precluding the bidder from the tender process.

Under the new regulations, the SQ will be replaced with uploading company information on to the Central Digital Platform.

23. Review Sellafeld practices (for example, PACE project) as suppliers want networking opportunities like what they have provided.

We will contact our colleagues at Sellafeld to obtain information about this project as are unaware of the specific details.

❖ **Topic: Impact of Regulations**
Questions:

24. SMEs have raised concerns about the increased workload and the number of procedures involved. Is there any clarity on how these changes will impact them?

Please see question 15 on the 'Small and Medium Enterprises' section and other answers above.

25. Will the new flexible procedure drastically change UKAEA approach? Support and Flexibility for SMEs?

Hopefully, the new processes will streamline processes for the ease of use for all bidders. It is not possible to comment further as this is a new procedure. We will provide guidance with the new documents.

26. What guidance is available on incorporating ESG goals into tenders? Discussion on using the Thrive/ SV theme (Climate related Themes as Climate Metric enable in various contracts).

There is guidance provided under National Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) for Social Value, please find it (aimed at local governments) at this link:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/procurement-hub/national-procurement-strategy/toolkit-social-value-achieving-community>. More information will be available once the new system is

set up.

27. Are there any tools or options for viewing a sector-wide pipeline to help SMEs better prepare for upcoming opportunities?

Once the Central Digital Platform is fully operational, hopefully organisations will be able to download a report of all pipelines published across by sector.

28. How will consortium bidding will be facilitated under the new regulations? Will there be specific guidance or requirements for joint ventures and partnerships?

Please see question 9 of the 'Increased Transparency' section above.

How to prepare and useful information:

Existing PCR15 rules will continue to apply for procurement contracts that are already in progress. As a supplier working with UKAEA you should consider the below to prepare for the changes:

- We encourage you to [familiarise yourself with the Act](#).
- You can [sign up for regular updates](#) from the Cabinet Office. They use this portal to keep you up to date on webinars and 'how to' videos.
- Register on the Central Digital Platform, when available.

Links to useful information and supplier guides on the new Act:

- [The Procurement Act 2023: A short guide for suppliers \(HTML\) - GOV.UK](#)
- Supplier knowledge drops: [The Official Transforming Public Procurement Knowledge Drops - GOV.UK](#)
- Central Digital Platform: [Guidance: Central Digital Platform and Publication of Information \(HTML\) - GOV.UK](#)
- Transforming Public Procurement: [Transforming Public Procurement - GOV.UK](#)
- Cabinet office Procurement Act Guidance: [Procurement Act 2023 - Guidance documents - GOV.UK](#)
- Register to UKAEA newsletter: [UK Fusion Suppliers' Events | UKAEA Events](#)
- Register to Transforming Public Procurement newsletter: [Transforming Public Procurement](#)
- The Official Procurement Act 2023 learning modules: [The Official Procurement Act 2023 learning modules - GOV.UK](#)
- We welcome any questions, suggestions, or feedback to be sent to us direct via supplychain@ukaea.uk or procurement@ukaea.uk.

We will issue further guidance and webinar information as it becomes available.