

# **Selling To Oxford City Council**

## **A Guide For Suppliers**



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## **Selling to Oxford City Council – A Guide for Suppliers**

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### **1. Background**

***Over £55 million spent a year and almost a third of this is with local suppliers***

Obtaining best value for the Council is an essential requirement and one that cannot be achieved without the support of our suppliers, both large and small.

The Council provides most services in-house and therefore buys a wide range of supplies, works and services to support our services to the residents and businesses in Oxford.

#### ***Partnerships for success***

Oxford City Council is committed to doing all it can to place orders for goods and services with local businesses and organisations. By offering your services to the Council you have the opportunity to increase your turnover and profitability and to be part of a vibrant local economy, which will be beneficial to both you and the community the Council serve. Our desire is to provide all sections of the community with the best possible service, achieving value for money at all times in respect of quality, guarantees, product benefits and service back-up.

This guidance will provide you with the information and support you need to enable you to maximize your prospects of securing business. If you share commitment to achieving value for money and quality, then the local community and its economy will benefit.

### **2. What the Council Buys**

The Council has over 5000 suppliers. Listed below are some of the typical purchases that the Council makes:

#### ***Supplies and Services***

- Print and Publicity materials/Advertising
- Vehicles e.g. Minibuses, Refuse Collection Vehicles (incl. Fuel)

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- Office Stationery, Equipment and Consumables (including ICT)
- Telephony
- Furniture
- Catering Provisions
- Corporate and Protective Clothing
- Security Services
- Agency Staff
- Courier Services
- Cleaning Materials
- Confidential Waste
- Insurance Services
- Window Cleaning

### Works

- New Social Housing
- Housing Repairs e.g. Roofing, Plumbing, Glazing, Electrical etc.
- Refurbishment Projects

### 3. Advertising

To meet the Council's Constitution and the EU Procurement Directives, Oxford City Council is required to advertise tenders in local publications and, for contracts worth more than £181,302 (for Goods and Services) or £4,551,413 (for Works) in the Supplement to the [Official Journal of the European Union](#).

The Council advertises a lot of opportunities valued above £10,000 via the [South East Business Portal](#). It is free to register and you will be notified when relevant opportunities are advertised.

### 4. Tendering Procedure

#### Quotations

The value of a contract (this is the total value of the life of the contract, normally 4 years not the annual spend level) determines the procedures that Council Officers follow. The contract value determines how many quotes we need to obtain or whether a tender process needs to be carried out. The current threshold levels are as follows:

Estimated Contract Value	Action Required by Oxford City Council
Up to £10,000	Obtain at least two quotes, attempt to seek at least one from a local supplier
£10,000 to £100,000	Obtain at least three quotes, attempt to seek at least one from a local supplier
£100,000 to £150,000	Obtain at least four quotes, attempt to seek at least one from a local supplier. An open tender process may be used instead where it is deemed appropriate
Over £150,000	Formal tender
More than £181,302*	Tender via OJEU advert and rules

**\*This is the current threshold for 'goods and services'. The current threshold for Works is £4,551,413.**

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## Types of Tender

The Council uses several types of tender procedures – the open procedure is the most common.

Under an open tender procedure all suppliers who register their interest can then access the documentation. This approach is usually followed when purchasing standard items or where there is a small market of capable suppliers.

The restricted procedure can be used if the contract value exceeds the OJEU threshold. The restricted procedure can best be described as a two-stage approach in which the Council invites interested suppliers to undergo a pre-qualification assessment before inviting them to tender. The restricted route may be used for non-standard or large goods and service requirements, where it would not be economic for all parties concerned if too large a tender field was invited to bid.

Occasionally we use the competitive dialogue process. This is used for complex projects such as major redevelopments and market testing. There are other procedures open to public sector authorities such as:

- Competitive dialogue with negotiation
- Innovation partnership
- Negotiated procedure (without prior publication)

## 5. How to Apply

### First Steps

1. Look for details of tenders in the [OJEU](#) and on websites.
2. The tender advertisement will detail the relevant route to express an interest.
3. You will then be sent:
  - Instructions to Tenderer (this document details important administrative procedures relating to the tender e.g. dates and times, method of tender return, evaluation criteria to be used in the selection of the successful supplier and details of how tender queries should be submitted).
  - Specification (this details the Council's requirements and must be read carefully and complied with).
  - Contract Terms and Conditions (this document gives details of the terms under which the Council wishes to do business.)

### Completing the Tender Documents

The tender documents the Council sends out to suppliers contain details of the requirements. The documents, particularly the specification, should be read carefully and all information completed fully and accurately. If you do not understand any part of the specification you should seek clarification and request further information. This must be done before the tender period closes.

## **6. Equity Compliance**

The Council is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all people irrespective of sex, age, race, or disability. The Council is keen to ensure that its suppliers abide by the law and are working to best practice in this area. All suppliers, as part of the tender process, will be required to provide evidence that they have equal opportunities policies in place and are committed to them.

## **7. Environmental and Sustainability Policies**

The Government's definition of 'value for money' in the context of procurement is 'the optimum combination of whole-life cost and quality (or fitness for purpose) to meet the user's requirement'. Procurement therefore has a far broader meaning than that of purchasing, buying or commissioning. It is about securing services and products that best meet the needs of users and the local community in its widest sense. Oxford City Council therefore takes sustainability as well as cost and quality into account when choosing suppliers.

Local government expenditure on goods, works and services has significant economic, social and environmental impacts. Minimising our impact in these areas, and where possible having a positive influence, helps to improve local quality of life and promote sustainable development. The cornerstone of sustainability is achieving development and progress that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

When applying for certain Council contracts, you may be requested to supply evidence of your practices and procedures as they relate to the environment. We often ask for a current ISO14001 certificate (if you have one) or, if you haven't, details of the procedures that you have in place regarding your sustainable practices. You are at a significant disadvantage if your company or organisation has no evidence of following sustainable practices.

## **8. Health and Safety**

The Council is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of its employees and that of all others affected by its undertakings. Contracts to supply goods or services will only be awarded to contractors who can satisfy the Council requirements in terms of resources required and their health and safety competence.

Successful contractors/suppliers are expected to demonstrate compliance with current health and safety legislation including:

- A commitment to the health and safety of its employees, client and others.
- Up to date health and safety policies and procedures.
- Adequate risk assessment procedures.
- An adequate system of monitoring and reporting accidents, incidents and ill health.
- Access to competent health and safety advice.
- Contracts are monitored to ensure compliance with contract standards and health and safety requirements.

## **9. Award Criteria**

The Council is required by government to ensure value for money and in doing so recognises that there are a number of factors to be considered when evaluating bids. Best Value includes considering whole life costs for our procurements. For each contract the criteria used and its relative value may differ and will be weighted accordingly. Every tender will have a tailored set of award criteria.

These may include: price, quality, aesthetic and technical considerations, service and technical support, whole life costs, environmental and social implications, etc.

## **10. Conditions of Contract**

In addition to specification all tenders will include conditions of contract, which will apply to any resulting contract. The Council has a number of standard conditions that it applies to all contracts. Some of these conditions relate to the standards the Council sets for itself and any of its suppliers/contracts like equality of opportunity and health & safety. Others reflect financial considerations such as insurance cover and default clauses etc. In addition there will be contract clauses that are contract specific and relate to such things as performance and delivery.

## 11. Tendering Do's and Don'ts

- Read the advertisement carefully and submit your application as detailed in the advertisement by the dates stipulated.
- In completing a bid make sure you answer the questions you are asked not just the ones you want to answer and provide all the information requested.
- Return the tender by the closing date and time specified. Late tenders will not be considered.
- Respond promptly to any requests for further information.
- If you do not understand any part of the specification seek clarification.

## 12. Contract Award

Once the contract has been awarded both successful and unsuccessful tenderers will be notified. Notifications for contracts over EU Procurement thresholds will be published in the Official Journal of European Communities (OJEU). <http://www.ted.europa.eu/>

The Council is always prepared to debrief unsuccessful tenderers to assist them in developing their abilities to tender for future contracts. This is reflected in EU Procurements where a "standstill" period is allowed in which unsuccessful bidders have the opportunity to ask for debriefing before a contract is awarded.

## 13. Performance Monitoring

Contracts will be monitored to ensure that they provide works, goods and services to the standards of quality and performance agreed.

The contract you have may include conditions relating to your contribution to this process by providing reports, permitting access to site and attending review meetings.

The Council wants to work to continually improve the way in which it provides its services and considers its suppliers and contractors have a valuable contribution to make towards this aim.

## 14. Complaints

Most will be monitored, discussed and resolved during the normal contract monitoring procedures. If a contractor or prospective supplier has a complaint about unfair treatment or discrimination they can use the Council's corporate complaints procedure.

Initially this will be contact with the person or office involved. Formal complaints should be sent to:

- Oxford City Council, Town Hall, St Aldate's, Oxford OX1 1BX

## 15. Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires all public authorities to respond to any request for any information. The Council is obliged to provide all information considered to be in the public interest. There are exemptions under the Act for commercial interest and confidentiality but these must be specific and not conflict with the Council's obligations under the Act to apply a "Public Interest" test.

Freedom of Information will be part of the tender process and where suppliers/contractors have concerns a consultation may be appropriate.

## 16. How we pay our Contractors/Suppliers

Payment terms are normally set out in the contract documents, but they may be annual/quarterly/monthly payments or payment on completion. Payment is normally within 30 days (14 days for local (Oxfordshire) SMEs) of receipt of a correct invoice, so to ensure that your payment is dealt with efficiently and to avoid delays, we ask for the following:

- Submit the invoice in the format agreed in the contract or purchase order
- Quote the purchase order number and/or contract title

- Address it to the correct officer and location
- Ensure that it adds up correctly
- Include as much information as possible about what the payment is for
- Only include requests for payment of supplied goods or services

The Council makes payment by BACS only in order to ensure that payment goes directly into the contractors/supplier's bank account.

For further advice, contact the Payments Team Leader on 01865 252653.

## **17. Meet the Team**

All organisations that bid for our contracts are entitled to feedback. We would encourage you to request feedback even if you are successful in bidding for work. Similarly, we welcome any feedback on this guide, on the bidding process or on your experience of working for the Council. Please contact us on 01865 252497, email us at [procurement@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:procurement@oxford.gov.uk) or write to us at:

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