



Selling to West Midlands Police

A guide for suppliers

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Introduction

This “Selling to West Midlands Police” guidance aims to inform suppliers about our procurement policies, the legal aspects of local government procurement, and what you need to do (if you wish to become a West Midlands Police supplier), to take advantage of the business opportunities we offer.

West Midlands Police aims

To reduce crime and disorder and make our communities feel safer.

Procurement in West Midlands Police

The Contracts and Procurement Unit (CPU) is based at the Force Headquarters building in Birmingham City Centre. The team is responsible for corporate Procurement Strategy, Policy and Practice and establishing major contracts for use by West Midlands Police customers and other Police Forces.

Procurement Policy

West Midlands Police buys goods, services and works by competition whenever possible, in line with UK government policy and the relevant EU legal requirements. Our aim is to achieve best value for money. This means considering the optimum combination of quality and whole life costs to meet the needs of the user.

How to get started

To let us know about your company, and to find out if we could use you.

- Go to www.west-midlands.pnn.police.uk Using the Search facility type in Procurement. This will take you to the webpage for the Procurement Unit to enable you to identify potential procurement activities you might be interested in.
- Go to “Tenders Electronic Daily” which is the electronic version of the supplement to the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). It is an online data service provided by the EU that lists higher value contracts for public sector organisations across the European Union. You can get details of the OJEU service at <http://europa.eu.int>
- Go to www.Supply2.gov.uk. The Portal allows access to lower-value opportunities from across the whole of the UK public sector. The Portal opens up the market to all types of business including small businesses, start-up companies and social enterprises to search and view open lower-value contract opportunities, typically under £100,000 and promote themselves to the UK public sector.

The West Midlands CPU keeps records of suppliers, and will decide which suppliers should be invited to submit either a simple quotation or a more formal tender. To help us consider you as a potential supplier, we may ask you to:

- Send details of the services you offer or goods you supply.
- Give details of your financial, commercial and technical background.
- Tell us what relevant experience you have.
- Tell us about the qualifications of your staff.
- Tell us about your quality management system.
- Provide references from previous customers.
- Arrange for us to visit your premises.

Quotations and Tenders

For small scale projects we invite written quotations from a number of suppliers.

For large projects where the estimated contract value exceeds a set amount, we invite formal tenders. If a contract will exceed limits set by the EU, we must follow the EU procurement directives (see below)

Whenever we invite a company to tender we:

- Specify our requirements in terms of outputs whenever appropriate to encourage innovation.
- Invite tenders from enough suppliers to ensure there is genuine competition whilst still giving bidders a reasonable chance of winning.
- Make sure tendering procedures and documentation are as clear and concise as possible and only ask for information necessary to evaluate bids.
- Establish the evaluation criteria on which the decision to award the contract will be based.
- Provide all tenderers with equivalent information and opportunity.

Submitting Quotations and Tenders

West Midlands Police uses its own terms and conditions so please do not refer to any standard terms and conditions that your company uses when you submit a single quotation or respond to a formal invitation to tender. In the case of a simple quotation, our terms and conditions are printed on the reverse of our standard order forms.

When you are invited to submit a formal tender you will receive a set of West Midlands Police terms and conditions, a specification, a tender form and a price schedule. You will be asked to sign, date and return the tender form and price schedule. If you don't do this your tender may be invalidated even if you send a covering letter.

Do not write on or change in any way the documents you return, except when asked to do so. You may send a covering letter and supplementary material of your own, but do not qualify any of the terms and conditions, or the specification. If you do you may be asked to withdraw the qualifications or risk having your offer rejected. You should also supply any additional information that is requested.

When you submit a tender make sure all instructions are followed carefully, or it may be rejected. For example tenders received after the stated deadline will be rejected even if the delay occurred in transit.

Evaluation of Tenders

All competing tenders are assessed against the same criteria which will have been established before the tenders are opened.

Your bid will be successful if it is the one that offers the West Midlands Police the best value for money (see West Midlands Police procurement policy above). Bids are evaluated by assessing how suppliers fulfil the key criteria in the specification, and other criteria such as price, delivery, date and quality. The West Midlands Police evaluation panel will/may interview tenderers who have submitted the best proposals.

A contract is awarded as soon as possible after the evaluation process has been completed.

Post tender clarification discussions may be entered into where there is opportunity to enhance value for money, where it is appropriate to do so.

Debriefing

If you would like to know why an offer of yours was rejected please ask West Midlands Police CPU that issued the tender and they will give you a full explanation.

Public Procurement Regulations

All public sector organisations must follow a series of EU procurement directives. These are implemented in the UK by the public procurement regulations which regulate how we buy goods, services or works.

These rules promote non-discriminatory, equal and transparent competition between suppliers of goods, services or works.

The Official Journal of the European Communities (OJEU)

If the value of the contract is estimated to be over the current EU procurement directives threshold and it is not exempt from the regulations, West Midlands Police is required to publish a contract notice in the supplement to the OJEU. The contract notices allow you to express an interest in any of the proposals advertised.

On 1 January 2010 the thresholds were set at £156,442 for supplies and certain services, and £3,927,260 for works. These thresholds are revised every two years. Up-to-date threshold figures can be found on the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) website. There are a number of procedures set by the regulations for inviting firms to tender, including:

- negotiated procedure
- open procedure
- restricted procedure

West Midlands Police generally uses the restricted procedure under which we limit invitations to tender to a set number of firms, the number being stated in the contract notice. If you reply within the time limit specified and enclose all the information requested West Midlands Police will consider whether to invite you to tender.

You will not be invited to tender if you do not send all the information requested within the time limit specified by an OJEU contract notice, even if you had previously expressed an interest.

The OJEU supplement is issued daily from Luxembourg on the intranet as Tenders Electronic Daily, and OJEU advertisements are included in Government Opportunities (0141 332 8247)

Opportunities for small to medium enterprises (SMES)

It is Government policy to encourage SME's – although we are a large force we have many contracts suitable for smaller organisations. We give SME's the opportunity to compete for our business where this will give best value for money and is fair to all firms.

Business Link is a support network that gives information and advice to SME's. If you wish to be directed to your nearest Business Link please contact 0845 600 9 006, or www.businesslink.gov.uk.

Policy on the environment

West Midlands Police constantly aims to improve its environmental performance by:

- encouraging manufacturers, suppliers and contractors, through higher specifications, to develop environmentally preferable goods and services at competitive prices.
- Making sure that any products derived from wildlife such as timber, plants and leather goods, are from sustainable sources. They must also comply with EU and international trading rules such as CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species).
- Working with contractors to improve environmental performance where this is relevant to the contract and will give value for money.
- Meeting all statutory regulations and official codes of practice and specifying that contractors do the same when working on West Midlands Police premises.

Environmental impact on Procurement

Procurement can have a very significant environmental impact. Our commitment to minimise this impact is reflected in our policies and the guidance followed by our suppliers and buyers.

We take account of whole life costs and not just the initial price when assessing value for money. We specify recycled products where practicable and when they give value for money, taking account of whole life costs.

Voluntary Schemes

Procurement directives distinguish between products or services specific to a contract and general processes and practices, which are not relevant to the procurement process.

For example, we would not make it a general requirement when awarding a contract that suppliers comply with EMAS or ISO14021, which are voluntary schemes for encouraging businesses to reduce their environmental impacts. However, these schemes are useful indicators of environmental performance and may be taken into account if relevant to the contract.

More information on policies and practice on green procurement is on DEFRA's website at www.defra.gov.uk.

Quality assurance

We want to place contracts with firms whose quality and product reliability are of a high standard, so that we can keep our own quality inspections to a minimum.

In our pre-tender assessment we look for evidence of a good quality control system, such as BS EN ISO 9000. Although formal certification to such a standard is not usually mandatory, it will help if you can show that effective systems for quality control are used.

To ensure safety and reliability, some specifications may require products to meet specific international, European or British technical standards. You may be asked to produce relevant certificates.

Information on quality is available from the Department of Trade and Industry on www.dti.gov.uk.

Your local Training & Enterprise Council (TEC) may also be able to help. Find out more on www.dfec.gov.uk (0208 547 3934) or contact your Business Link on www.businesslink.gov.uk.

Electronic trading

West Midlands Police are implementing a suite of products to enable them to conduct business electronically with their suppliers. The initial phase is the introduction of the Bluelight e-tendering site, an on-line e-tendering and quotation solution.

The www.bluelight.gov.uk e-tendering website is a central point of reference where tender and quotation opportunities are advertised and displayed by Police Forces, and other emergency service organisations.

Bluelight will also provide a number of benefits to you, including, reduced procurement timescales from advertising to award, increased procurement opportunities, reduced costs of tendering and quotation processes, an auditable, transparent and fair process, and access to procurement documentation 24 hours a day.

The West Midlands Police long term aim is to do business with all suppliers electronically, automating and integrating the whole purchase to pay cycle to maximise efficiency. Considerable savings are available to West Midlands Police and our suppliers such as reduced processing costs and fewer errors due to re-keyed data..

West Midlands Police will however, maintain alternative trading routes with those suppliers who are not in a position to trade electronically but are nevertheless still able to offer best value for money.

Prompt payment of invoices

West Midlands Police recognises the importance of cash flow to all companies, especially small firms. It has adopted the CBI Prompt Payers Code, and has a clear policy to pay bills in accordance with the terms of the contract. Where no contract terms are specified, our policy is to pay within 30 calendar days of receipt of a correct invoice.

You can help to make sure invoices are paid promptly by checking that all invoice details are accurate, including the purchase order number, and that the invoice is correctly addressed. Let us know about changes of name, address or bank details as soon as possible. To help us pay quickly we pay suppliers through Bankers Automated Clearing Service (BACS).

Propriety

West Midlands Police personnel follow a strict code of procurement practice. They and members of their families cannot accept gifts or offers of hospitality from individuals or organisations with whom West Midlands Police has, or could possibly have at some time in the future, a contractual relationship.