

# ***Suppliers' Guide - a guide to working with APUC***

## ***About APUC***

APUC Limited is the procurement Centre of Expertise for Scotland's 60 universities and colleges. It is a private limited company, owned by institutions and established in response to the 2006 McClelland Report: *'Review of Public Procurement in Scotland'*, which made recommendations for public procurement reform.

APUC's core vision and mission is to work jointly, as one team with member institutions, to maximise the contribution that advanced procurement makes to Scotland's investment in teaching, research and knowledge transfer such that institutions can deliver more with the funds that they have available. APUC undertakes to support the embedding and consistent application of good procurement practice within Scotland's universities and colleges, increasing the sustainable value for money from institutions' procurement expenditure through the provision of advanced procurement delivery.

APUC will work to maximise the opportunities to provide wide and open access to the supplier market for potential business from the university and college sectors – facilitating the ability for companies of all sizes to have the opportunity to compete on a level playing field for potential business across the sectors.

## ***The Way APUC Does Business***

Although APUC's member community are not members of the public sector as such (universities and colleges are autonomous organisations with a variety of funding streams), many receive material amounts of public funding. A fair and open procurement process is followed when selecting suppliers and, in light of the levels of public funding received by many of the member community, APUC conducts procurement in line with the Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2006, also known as European Union (EU) procurement regulations, and the EC Treaty Principles.

In respect of each collaborative and institutional procurement process managed by APUC, APUC:

- assesses and establishes mechanisms (where possible) to reduce potential barriers to participation in tendering opportunities for suppliers of all sizes;
- advertises all requirements on the Public Contracts Scotland portal;
- uses standardised procurement processes and documents including pre-qualification questionnaires (PQQs), invitations to tender (ITTs) and terms and conditions (and will use the Scottish standard sPQQ when available);
- uses e-tendering (although submitting a hard copy is also possible);
- ensures the fair and equitable treatment of suppliers; and
- offers comprehensive debriefing covering the strengths and weaknesses of each bid to assist in improving any future tendering requirements.

## ***Consistent, Comprehensive Service***

APUC operates a comprehensive client relationship management model to all member institutions to ensure effective implementation of collaborative agreements.

APUC's internal Procurement Manual, is based on the Scottish Government Procurement Journey to ensure, wherever possible, that procurement activities are effectively and consistently applied in a common way with other parts of the publicly funded sectors in Scotland.

APUC works with client institutions to assist implementation of the Scottish Sustainable Procurement Action Plan.

APUC has four work streams and they work together and in partnership with the member institutions to deliver best value and provide a multi-faceted value enhancing experience for the supplier community.

- **Collaborative Contracting** – managing and delivering the sector's collaborative contracting programme, including jointly working with the Scottish Government, other sectoral Centres of Expertise and regional HE/FE purchasing consortia across the UK.
- **eSolutions** - works with institutions and the government to implement and develop the PECOS system and with the HE/FE sector on a UK basis on other sector focussed e-solutions and tools. Works closely with the supplier community in gathering of management information and in e-enablement of suppliers.
- **College Services** - Dedicated procurement managers support colleges as required in project management of high value / above EU threshold tenders and provide support in developing process materials and guidance for use in colleges at operational level. Support is provided to colleges to enhance procurement capability across the sector.
- **Processes and Best Practice** - APUC supports sector best practice development and works jointly with the Scottish Government on development of the Procurement Journey and promotes the use of it across the university and college sectors. APUC manage a training programme for client institutions and also the Procurement Capability Assessment programme across the university and college sectors.

## ***The Benefits of Collaborative Procurement***

By operating in partnership with institutions and in an open and transparent way with suppliers, APUC develops confidence-based working relationships and disseminates best procurement practices, which in turn drives efficiencies in processes and time.

Collaborative procurement can offer suppliers several advantages in doing business with institutions:

- Reductions in your costs and time through more efficient and straight-forward pre-qualification and tendering processes coupled with comprehensive contract management. Successful contract delivery will serve to consolidate suppliers' relationships within the sector.
- A central point of contact.
- Tender opportunities easy to locate on the Public Contracts Scotland portal.
- Opportunity to influence best practice dissemination and establish standard processes.

Some aspects / hints that may be of use when taking part in collaborative procurement are below:

- Where it is a major contract, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) may wish to monitor the award of large contracts on Public Contracts Scotland, with a view to seeking opportunities for sub-contracting from a larger supplier.
- Having previous experience of supplying to a university or college doesn't mean a company will be favoured in the evaluation process. All tenderers for a tender are assessed against the same award criteria.
- When submitting a tender, ensure you answer the questions directly and don't include promotional material unless requested. Remember to return tenders or queries on time, as strict deadlines apply.
- Become familiar with the Suppliers' Charter – this is a joint statement between public sector organisations and businesses, with defined responsibilities for both parties. See [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/Procurement/Selling/Supplierscharter2](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/Procurement/Selling/Supplierscharter2)

## ***Pecos & Parabilis (e-procurement systems)***

Pecos is a fully managed, award-winning service for the Scottish public sector to buy goods and services online and is used by the vast majority of universities and colleges in Scotland. Parabilis is the UK university sector's primary e-procurement system and is used by a number of universities as an alternative to Pecos. e-procurement facilitates efficient processing of orders, invoices and payments, making business easier for you. The services also help deliver commitment to contracts and save you time and costs by enabling a reduced interface with all institutions and streamlining purchasing and payment processes electronically.

For more information see [www.apuc-scot.ac.uk/eprocurement.htm](http://www.apuc-scot.ac.uk/eprocurement.htm) or [www.eprocurementscotland.com](http://www.eprocurementscotland.com)

## ***Where to Find Contract Opportunities***

Tender opportunities for public sector contracts are advertised on the Public Contracts Scotland portal at [www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk](http://www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk)

It is free to register and suppliers opt in to receive an automatic email alert to keep track of adverts within their business area(s). Further functionality has recently been added, including 'quick quotes' for procurements below the OJEU threshold.

## ***Customer Care and Further Information***

APUC operates to the highest standards in purchasing excellence, administration and management. APUC's performance in terms of satisfactorily resolving any difficulties that may arise in providing this service is subject to scrutiny. If any supplier has an issue that they wish to bring to our attention, then they are encouraged to complete our customer care form online at [www.apuc-scot.ac.uk/customercare.htm](http://www.apuc-scot.ac.uk/customercare.htm)