

# Meet the Buyer Procurement Event – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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This FAQ compiles all questions from the event and specifies the response from each organisation where available.

## Legend:

**SCC:** Sheffield City Council; **SYMCA:** South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority; **STH:** Sheffield Teaching Hospitals; **SHU:** Sheffield Hallam University; **UoS:** University of Sheffield; **SC:** Sheffield College

## Q1. How do I register as a new supplier for the central digital platform?

Link to the government Find a Tender Service (FTS): <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Search>

## Q2. Can you reshare the link for the government portal to register as a supplier?

Link to the government Find a Tender Service (FTS): <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Search>

## Q3. How do you register to get onto all your individual platforms to access your tenders? It's sometimes difficult to find opportunities.

- **SCC:** The Council's e-procurement portal: <https://yortender.eu-supply.com/login.asp?B=YORTENDER>  
Also register on the Sheffield Business Directory <https://www.sheffield-business.co.uk/> (the Council will be using this to find suppliers to invite for quote)
- **SYMCA:** SYMCA use the ProContract online tendering system. Current opportunities can be found by selecting the “Sheffield City Region Mayoral Combined Authority Group” from the Organisations list: <https://procontract.due-north.com/Opportunities/Index?v=2>
- **STH:** Sheffield Teaching Hospitals use Atamis: <https://suppliersupport.atamis.co.uk/hc/en-gb>
- **SHU:** Sheffield Hallam University use In-tend: <https://in-tendhost.co.uk/sheffieldhallamuniversity.aspx/Home>
- **UoS:** Sheffield University use In-tend: <https://in-tendhost.co.uk/sheffield.aspx/Home>
- **SC:** Sheffield College use In-tend: <https://in-tendhost.co.uk/sheffieldcollege.aspx/Home>

## Q4. How do I get on the distribution list for the tender opportunities?

- **SCC / SYMCA / STH / SHU / UoS:** See answers to Q1–3
- **SC:** See answers to Q3

**Q5. How do you get onto the portal? Does it send out all the tenders or can you specialise on your product?**

- Registration links above; alerts are issued based on your supplier registration. For further information on FTS a fact sheet is available here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-act-2023-short-guides/central-digital-platform-factsheet-html>

**Q6. How do we find out about upcoming framework opportunities?**

- Registering on the systems above is recommended. This is for new framework opportunities and as some frameworks (depending on their nature) are also reopened periodically for new suppliers to apply to join and will be advertised through the above. Also be mindful of framework providers (CCS; YPO; ESPO; NEPRO and so forth) who set up frameworks themselves from which contracting authorities can call-off from — recommended to look out for opportunities to join their frameworks too.

**Q7. Why am I only getting notifications for one service when I offer multiple services?**

- This is likely to be related to the supplier registration details provided on the portal in question; we recommend checking this reflects all your service areas offered.

**Q8. I can't find a tender for my very specific service. Are there generalised bids to help enter public sector & approach buyer?**

- **SCC:** Whilst a framework may be advertised to allow for a range of services to potentially be called-off from, a tender must have some clarity as to what it is being set up to procure.

**Q9. Is tender bidding the one and only way to engage with public sector?**

- **SCC:** No, other engagement opportunities may include for example pre-market engagement exercises, and procurement pipeline notices; and (as applicable) raising relevant questions to clarify on specific points albeit this is during the bidding phase. E-mail: [procurement@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:procurement@sheffield.gov.uk)

**Q10. What are the threshold levels for each of the organisations represented on the panel?**

- **SCC:** Outside of the thresholds set out in the procurement legislation the Council's internal rules are contained within Part 4 of the constitution ('Contracts Standing Orders' or CSO for short). These are periodically revised and published here:  
<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=571&info=1&MD=Co>

nstitution&bcr=1

**Current thresholds (inclusive of VAT):** Goods and Services up to £9,999 — single quote; £10,000 to £29,000 minimum of three quotes; over £30,000 to procurement threshold\* strategy to be determined — in line with our Ethical Procurement Policy, this is typically quotes up to £150,000 in value with a formal tender process over £150,000. For Works and non-routine activity (e.g. Light Touch, concessions etc) the thresholds are higher as published in CSO.

- **STH:** Current thresholds inclusive of VAT: 0–£9,999 single quote, £10k to £34,999 3 informal quotes, £35k to PCR Threshold (£140k) 3 formal quotations, Above £140k Full PCR tender
- **SHU:** Below the thresholds stipulated in the Procurement legislation our internal financial regulations thresholds can be found here: <https://www.shu.ac.uk/finance-directorate/suppliers-zone>
- **SYMCA:** <https://www.southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk/business/tenders-and-contracts>
- **UoS:** <https://sheffield.ac.uk/procurement/suppliers-information>

#### Q11. Is the tender process used for all work? What about small, one-off pieces (<£1,000)?

- **SCC:** Anything up to £1,000 in value may be a single quote (as per the thresholds above). The Sheffield Business Directory would be one source of information for this.
- **SYMCA:** Single quote or more
- **STH:** Single quote up to £10k
- **SHU:** Buyers are encouraged to obtain at least 3 quotes for lower-value requirements but can award on a single quote, and so an open tender process is unlikely to be run for a lower value (e.g., £1,000) requirement as the expense incurred to tender would not be reasonable in these circumstances.
- **UoS:** Single quote or more?
- **SC:** Single quote or more?

#### Q12. What is the timescale for a procurement?

- **SCC:** Determined by size/complexity and information requested; for above-threshold tenders minimum bidding period is typically **25 days**. Further information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-act-2023-guidance-documents-procure-phase/time-periods-html>

#### Q13. How often does a tendering opportunity come up?

- **SCC:** Dependent on the opportunity; frameworks may reopen periodically. Register with the systems above for alerts

**Q14. Larger businesses usually have an advantage (cash flow, bid teams). How will you make this more inclusive?**

- **SCC:** The Council's Ethical Procurement Policy (revised policy to be published later this year) recognises these points, and we therefore commit to:

Seek quotes up to £150,000 in value for a more simplified procedure

As much as possible invite at least two local providers to quote

Utilise the Sheffield Business Directory as a key source of information (hence important to register!).

And for higher value activities, publish a procurement pipeline to allow time to prepare for planned contracting opportunities

Ensure our tenders support consortia bids

Consider and test innovative and creative ways to increase investment in Sheffield and/or local not-for-profit organisations.

More generally, support is available on the Business Sheffield website:

<https://www.welcometosheffield.co.uk/business/procurement/>

- **SHU:** While it can be true that larger businesses have an advantage in that they may often have a dedicated bid team or the financial ability to pay a bid writer. However, smaller business also tend to have lower overheads (no large corporate office etc) so can often compete well on price. For above threshold tenders feedback on an unsuccessful tender is mandatory and taking this on board and using it to refine future bids can often lead to success. While a tender process is usually necessary for above threshold contracts, SHU is actively working to make the process easier for smaller suppliers. This includes simplifying the procurement documents so they are clearer and easier to follow and reviewing the number of stages - for example we may increase the number of stages with the first stage only requiring a limited number of short selection questions reducing the time commitment from bidders until you know you have been shortlisted.

**Q15. Tender opps are huge; can you facilitate collaborations or break into smaller bids?**

- **SCC:** See answer to Q14
- **SHU:** See answer to Q14

**Q16. Tender bidding takes time; would sole traders be disadvantaged?**

- **SCC:** See answer to Q14
- **SHU:** See answer to Q14

### Q17. Micro business — tender process cumbersome. What support is there with limited capacity?

- **SCC:** See answer to Q14
- **SHU:** See answer to Q14

### Q18. In framework agreement, I'm submitting quotes but not successful. Can I see who won and the price?

- **SCC:** A confirmation letter should normally be issued to unsuccessful framework bidders advising them of the fact along with details of the successful provider(s). Price information would not be released as this is commercial in confidence. If you have not received a notification for a Council framework bid contact [procurement@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:procurement@sheffield.gov.uk) with the tender reference number and title for a response.
- **SYMCA:** Happy with repeating first sentence opposite as a response?
- **SHU:** A confirmation letter should normally be issued to unsuccessful framework bidders advising them of the fact along with details of the successful provider(s). Price information would not be released as this is commercial in confidence.
- **UoS:** Happy with repeating first sentence opposite as a response?
- **SC:** Happy with repeating first sentence opposite as a response?

### Q19. Are you considering requiring AI policies from businesses bidding?

- **SCC:** The Council currently has no general requirement for a bidder to have an AI policy in place, should there be a relevant requirement to have one for a specific procurement this would be detailed in the tender pack.
- **SYMCA:** Same as SCC
- **SHU:** The University currently has no general requirement; if relevant, detailed in the tender pack. We have adopted Crown Commercial Service wording requiring any AI-generated content to be clearly marked and checked for accuracy.
- **UoS:** Same as SCC
- **SC:** Same as SCC

### Q20. If AI writes tenders, how will you judge who can truly deliver?

- **SCC:** Important that AI is used appropriately; bidders are contractually obliged to deliver what they state. Method Statement questions are framed to understand how proposals deliver requirements.
- **SYMCA:** Same as SCC?
- **SHU:** This is a challenge for the public sector generally. AI can make tendering a realistic prospect for SMEs wishing to engage in a tender process as it significantly reduces the costs associating with bidding.

However, while AI can generate responses that align to a specification, responses usually require specific examples of experience and detail on how a contract will be delivered to achieve a high score. Without this detail the evaluator cannot be assured that the supplier can deliver the contract and this is not something AI can do without those inputs from a supplier.

SHU requires that any AI generated content as part of a tender process is flagged as such and is checked for accuracy. Tools are also available to check whether something is AI generated. Due diligence conducted as part of the tender process can provide added assurance as to the suppliers capability.

In addition, the Procurement Act 2023 adds additional safeguards once a contract has been awarded. If a contract is not being delivered to the required standard it can be terminated and the supplier can be barred from bidding from future public sector opportunities.

**UoS:** Same as SCC

- **SC:** Same as SCC

## **Q21. Tech & business now move faster than procurement does. Impact comes from lean, adaptive teams, yet the system rewards size over capability. How will you change?**

- **SCC:** We look to evaluate tenders based on capability and not size, and where there are high value contracts allow for consortia bids and / or sub-contracting to allow two or more smaller organisations to come together and bid for example, encouraging innovation.
- **SYMCA:** Same as SCC
- **SHU:** We look to evaluate tenders based on capability and not size; allow consortia/sub-contracting.
- **UoS:** Same as SCC
- **SC:** Same as SCC

## **Q22. Who QAs the tender questions and word limits?**

- **SCC:** Questions are set in relation to the specification and in conjunction with service area and subject matter experts as required. The word limit set typically reflects the 'weighting' applicable to the question and is intended to strike the right balance between providing evaluators with sufficient detail to score, whilst not overburdening bidders with having to provide excessive detail.
- **SYMCA:** Same as SCC
- **SHU:** 750 words is not unusual (750 characters would be). Word counts are usually proportionate; raise concerns via clarification — counts often reviewed if others raise the same point.

- **UoS:** Same as SCC
- **SC:** Same as SCC

**Q23. What accreditation is needed for ESL providers for Job Centre clients (via SCC / Combined Authority)?**

- **SCC:** This should be made clear in the tender documentation. If anything is not clear use the clarification Q&A function to confirm with the contracting authority during the bidding phase.

**Q24. Private health clinic with qualified professionals — what opportunities are local?**

- See above responses to be alerted to opportunities.

**Q25. Advice for SMEs importing medicine for NHS; insurance paperwork before winning contracts?**

- **SCC:** N/A on medicines. For insurance, there is only a requirement to have required insurances in place upon contract award, therefore you may still bid should you not have relevant insurance(s) in place; however if awarded the contract then you are committing to taking these out and evidencing they are in place
- **SYMCA:** See SCC answer
- **STH:** Questioner was referred to the NHS Commercial Medicines Unit in the first instance after the event
- **SHU:** See SCC answer
- **UoS:** See SCC answer
- **SC:** See SCC answer

**Q26. Best way to approach NHS/GPs to offer services/products for quicker & accurate diagnosing?**

- **SCC:** NHS
- **SYMCA:** N/A
- **STH:** Most GPs are independent practices of partners. However, as the ICB have oversight recommended they are contacted.
- **SHU:** N/A
- **UoS:** N/A
- **SC:** N/A

### Q27. Best way to approach NHS to support front-line teams with mental health/stress support?

- **SCC:** NHS
- **SYMCA:** N/A
- **STH:** A lot of NHS Trusts have Employee Assistance Programmes with suppliers such as Health Assured who could be approached.
- **SHU:** N/A
- **UoS:** N/A
- **SC:** N/A

### Q28. Independent health clinic — scope to support the NHS?

- **SCC:** NHS
- **SYMCA:** N/A
- **STH:** This is difficult to answer without knowing their specific services as we may already provide in house. They should monitor tender portals and link in with the ICB.
- **SHU:** N/A
- **UoS:** N/A
- **SC:** N/A

### Q29. SCC long-term commissioning strategy for social care & nursing (esp. small providers)?

- **SCC:** The Council's commissioning strategy is available here:  
[https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-12/asc\\_strategy\\_delivery\\_plan.pdf](https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-12/asc_strategy_delivery_plan.pdf)
- **SYMCA / STH / SHU / UoS / SC:** N/A

### Q30. Top tips for social value?

- **SCC:** For higher value tenders, the Social Value Portal is used. Further detail is included within tenders; bidder's toolkit: <https://bidder.socialvalueportal.com/> Otherwise, if asked as an MSQ, the Tender Tips Masterclass presentation/slides had useful information on MSQs.
- **STH:** We do not use the social value portal. We have our own Social Value questions.
- **SHU:** 1. Align with the Buyer's Priorities

Review the tender documents for the buyer's social value themes (e.g. local employment, sustainability, wellbeing).

Tailor your offer to match their goals—don't just copy-paste generic commitments.

#### 2. Be Specific and Measurable

Avoid vague promises like "we'll support the community."



Instead, say: “We will offer 2 apprenticeships to local unemployed people.”

### **3. Leverage Your SME Strengths**

Highlight your agility, local presence, and community ties.

SMEs often have stronger local networks—use that to your advantage.

### **4. Include Delivery Plans**

Explain how you’ll deliver the social value: who’s responsible, what the timeline is, and how you’ll measure success.

This builds credibility and shows you’ve thought it through.

### **5. Quantify the Impact**

Use numbers: jobs created, hours volunteered, carbon saved, etc.

Buyers love metrics—they help justify awarding points.

### **6. Show Legacy Value**

Offer initiatives that last beyond the contract, like training programs or community infrastructure.

This shows long-term thinking and commitment.

### **7. Track and Report**

Include a plan for monitoring and reporting social value outcomes.

This reassures buyers that you’ll follow through.

- **UoS:** Anything to add?
- **SC:** Anything to add?

## **Q31. How much emphasis does SCC put on the Social Value Act? Guidance to demonstrate wider local impact?**

- **SCC:** The Social Value Act requires us to have regard to how our purchasing decisions, and the procurement processes that we use to make them, may improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the city and this duty is important to us.

It is also reflected in individual procurement exercises, with the relative importance reflected in the 'weighting' allocated to the social value part of the bid. See answer to Q30 re. knowledge, support and guidance.

- **SYMCA / STH / SHU / UoS / SC:** N/A

### **Q32. How important is social value in your contracts? How will you support SMEs?**

- **SCC:** See answer to Q31
- **STH (NHS):** NHS Tenders must have a minimum social value weighting of 10%
- **SHU:** In line with our responsible procurement statement, social value from contracts is important to SHU. Social Value forms part of the majority of Univeristy collaborative frameworks e.g. via NEUPC and, while not currently mandated, it is considered for above threshold tenders. We do not currently contract with a specific system (e.g. Social value portal) and social value is therefore likely to be tested via specific method statement questions. We refer to the response above regarding top tips on social value.

### **Q33. Is paying hundreds of £ a year to Social Value Portal to input numbers value for money/public benefit?**

- **SCC:** The Social Value Portal offers benefits in measuring/recording social value and an industry-recognised set of standard TOMs (measures).
- **SYMCA / STH / SHU / UoS / SC:** N/A

### **Q34. Is there a threshold for social value or can it be applied to all?**

- **SCC:** All the Council's commercial activities will involve some consideration of social benefit opportunities. The award of any tender with an indicative value of over £250,000 will include criteria designed to achieve social value outcomes with a minimum weighting value of 10%, plus 5% for Employment & Skills (unless there are relevant and compelling reasons not to do so).
- **STH (NHS):** NHS Tenders must have a minimum social value weighting of 10%
- **SHU:** See above response

### **Q35. When will Business Sheffield be proactive in opening opportunities to the deaf community?**

- **SCC:** We always look to make our opportunities as accessible as possible. Where this is not the case use the clarification Q&A function to check with the contracting authority whether a suitable alternative format is available.  
We are looking to eliminate bias from procurement by using standardised (clear,

predetermined) evaluation criteria; creating diverse evaluation panels as much as possible and asking evaluators to document their assessments separately to prevent groupthink.

### **Q36. Will the public sector put reading event space into their tender process?**

- **SCC:** We always look to make our opportunities as accessible as possible. Where this is not the case use the clarification Q&A function to check with the contracting authority whether a suitable alternative format is available.  
We are looking to eliminate bias from procurement by using standardised (clear, predetermined) evaluation criteria; creating diverse evaluation panels as much as possible and asking evaluators to document their assessments separately to prevent groupthink.

### **Q37. How are organisations changing processes to eliminate bias & unconscious bias?**

- **SCC:** See answer to Q37
- **SHU:** The SHU procurement team assure each procurement process using core public procurement principles (fairness, transparency, equal opportunity etc.). Specifications are reviewed to allow for all suitable solutions. Evaluation criteria are published and applied consistently. The university is looking to roll out unconscious bias briefings to all those undertaking evaluation activity, using tried and tested training currently used for recruitment processes.

### **Q38. As a woman of colour owning an electrical company, how to get equal opportunity?**

- **SCC:** We recommend registering on the systems referenced in the response to questions 1-4; keep an eye out for consortia or sub-contracting opportunities for larger value contracts. The answer to Q37 may also be of relevance.

### **Q39. For Mary Mundy: You only spoke about SMEs — what about sole traders?**

- **SCC:** Sole traders are able to bid for public contracts (the SMEs talk was also aimed at sole traders as well). There will also be opportunities for 'below threshold' opportunities (such as quotes) therefore sign up to the Sheffield Business Directory if not already done so

### **Q40. Do tenders ever go to sole traders or strictly limited companies?**

- **SCC:** Depends on the value; 'tenders' are generally higher value activity which a sole trader alone may not have capacity to deliver. We encourage consortia bids and/or sub-contracting. Lower-value quote activity allows in some cases for specific organisations to be invited to quote—do sign up to the Sheffield Business Directory.

**Q41. Independent researcher offering research & writing services — how does this apply to sole traders?**

- See answer to Q40

**Q42. As a sole trader, is it problematic not having a separate business bank account when submitting a tender?**

- SCC: No

**Q43. Case studies template to ensure all required information is included?**

- SCC: As the case studies being asked for will be tender specific, and the need relevant to the procurement in question, any template requirements will be included within the tender pack. Similarly, anonymous case studies may or may not be acceptable depending on their intended purpose. If the tender is not clear use the clarification Q&A function to confirm with the contracting authority during the bidding phase.

The Tender Tips Masterclass presentation and slides also contain useful information on case studies

**Q44. Are anonymous case studies acceptable (NDAs signed; named case not yet available)?**

- See answer to Q43.

**Q45. Weighting for public sector vs private sector case studies with relevant experience?**

- SCC: Specific to the procurement; should be clear in the tender pack. Generally, unless stated otherwise, both are weighted equally. Use clarification Q&A if unclear.

**Q46. Why ask for CVs of key personnel when SMEs can't guarantee availability post-award?**

- SCC: If applicable at all, this would be specific to certain procurements, however generally speaking this would not be asked for; where CVs are being requested, we recommend using the clarification Q&A function to confirm with the contracting authority during the bidding phase their exact purpose in this regard (i.e. is there an expectation that any named team members must be available and why).

#### **Q47. How are SCC, UoS and SYMCA involved in green infrastructure in new developments, and how best to engage?**

- **SCC:** Sheffield City Council is actively embedding green infrastructure into new developments through initiatives such as the Grey to Green programme, which transforms urban spaces with sustainable drainage, planting, and active travel routes. Linked to the Council's Local Plan, our planning policies also promote biodiversity, nature recovery, and climate resilience.

Tender opportunities issued by the Council are published (see Q1-4). Where the Council utilises existing contractual arrangements, prospective suppliers are encouraged to engage directly with the relevant primary contractors to explore opportunities to join their supply chains.

On private developments, SCC planning service working with statutory consultee, the Lead Local Flood Authority, actively promote the use of Sustainable drainage in development. This often includes the creation of new blue/green infrastructure to fulfil this role – delivering the slowing of flow and treatment to required levels. Sheffield Council has taken the choice to offer adoption of SuDS in both Highway and open space environments to facilitate this development such as housing.

#### **Q48. If this event is to help win public sector work in Sheffield, which organisations does this advice apply to?**

- **SCC:** The event was intended to be relevant when bidding for contracts with all UK public sector organisations, as the broad principles are the same.

#### **Q49. Specialist trades (e.g., mould and damp) should be separated from mainstream works; bundling limits opportunities.**

- **SCC:** Tender opportunities issued by the Council are published on the YORtender portal. Where the Council utilises existing contractual arrangements, prospective suppliers are encouraged to engage directly with the relevant primary contractors to explore opportunities to join their supply chains.
- **SYMCA / STH / SHU / UoS / SC:** Anything to add?

#### **Note:**

There has been reference in some answers to the procurement thresholds. These are monetary values that dictate when public sector contracts must follow stricter procurement rules, like public advertising and competitive bidding. These are in relation to the Procurement Act 2023 and are currently as follows. These values will next be updated 1 January 2026 and may change after this date:

Supply and services contracts (sub-central government - the Council for example): £214,904 (inc. VAT)

Light Touch Regime for services: £663,540 (inc. VAT)

Works contracts: £5,372,609 (inc. VAT)

It should also be noted healthcare services (typically procured by the NHS) fall under separate regulations with differing thresholds and requirements. These are referred to as the Provider Selection Regime (PSR) in shorthand.