



Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium

Policy on Working with Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME's)

February 2016

1. About SUPC

Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium (SUPC) is a membership-based buying organisation for universities and further education colleges that primarily develops and manages framework agreements. By using our agreements, members can purchase competitively priced goods and services across a wide range of commodity areas. These agreements can save members both time and money. Members also have access to advice, support and expert market knowledge. SUPC is a division of Southern Universities Management Services, a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales (no. 2732244) and registered charity No 1042175.

SUPC is committed to acquiring goods and services for its members without causing harm to others. In so doing, SUPC is committed to supporting the UK Government's approach to implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

SUPC is a member of Procurement England Limited (PEL), the shared vehicle by which English HE purchasing consortia manage joint developmental and improvement projects for collaborative procurement in our sector. Together we have published our shared [Sustainability Policy](#) to which all PEL member consortia are committed.

2. SUPC's Commitment to SME's

SUPC recognises that SMEs can offer members additional flexibility, expertise, service and customisation but often have difficulties accessing public sector contracts. SUPC is committed to removing the barriers for SMEs to engage with our framework agreements and promote easier access for small businesses where they offer members better value for money.

SUPC is committed to reducing the barrier for SMEs by:

- Rationalising the requirements of the selection criteria for all frameworks and ensuring that these criteria do not directly or indirectly disadvantage SMEs.
- Considering the business needs of the small enterprise and taking them into account when designing the procurement process on a commodity specific basis. This will include consideration of an appropriate lotting strategy.
- Pre-engaging with SMEs to ensure they are aware of future opportunities and how to complete tender documents.

- Making opportunities easier to find by making them all accessible on one free-of-charge online portal.
- Mandating the use of e-tendering to reduce the administrative burden of completing and submitting tender responses.
- Making sure small firms are treated fairly by including prompt payment terms in the conditions of the framework agreement.
- Working with members to draw on their local supplier base to generate interest in advertised opportunities.

3. The SUPC Tendering Site

Details of all forthcoming and future SUPC tenders can be found at <https://intendhost.co.uk/supc/asp/Home>. SUPC works closely with other HE purchasing consortia and details of their tendering opportunities can be found on their websites – a list of our collaborative partners can be found at <http://www.supc.ac.uk/national-collaboration/consortia-partners>.

4. SUPC Endorsement and Framework Agreement Supplier Profile

This statement and commitment by SUPC is led by its Sustainability Champion, Paul Mander, Head of Operational Procurement, and is supported by the SUPC Sustainability Group and SUPC Council. It will be carried out by the category managers who, with the support of a sustainability expert, will consider all relevant SME considerations in their framework agreements and ensure they meet the objectives set. This work is fully endorsed and supported by the Head of SUPC and the SUPC Board

During the period 2011 to 2015, SUPC awarded 14 framework agreements to a total of 94 suppliers. Of these suppliers:

- 36% are large, (or subsidiary of a large company)
- 28% are medium size
- 23% are small size
- 13% are micro size

Company sizes defined in EU law: [EU recommendation 2003/361](#) 

This statement has been approved and published by the SUPC Board and will be reviewed at least once annually. If you have any questions, please contact us at supc@reading.ac.uk.

December 2015

Review Date: December 2016