



# BUSINESS GROWTH SERIES

## GUIDE 1



GETTING TENDER READY



# GROW YOUR BUSINESS THROUGH WINNING CONTRACTS

Welcome to our Business Growth Series, designed to support you to win contracts and grow your business. This series is brought to you by **Hertfordshire Growth Hub** and **Complete Tenders**, whose mission is to help small businesses compete against their rivals and win contracts. This series will guide you through the key areas involved in finding opportunities, getting ready to tender and writing winning tender responses.







## GUIDE 1

# GETTING TENDER READY

Choosing to respond to public sector tender opportunities will be a strategic business decision. They require an investment of time and resources; a real commitment from you and your team to be successful, but the successes can catapult your business into the big league and ensure long-term sustainability and cash flow for years.

Before engaging with your first tender it is wise to stand back and look at your business and ensure you are 'tender ready'. In this guide our experienced tender writers share the key steps you should take to give you the best chance of success.



# STEPS TO MAXIMISE SUCCESS

## 1 Be clear on the product or service you can provide

You may be thinking that you would like to win a contract in your sector, e.g. security, cleaning, construction, maintenance. It is good to start with this definition as it confirms the overall industry your business is in, however, to increase your chances of winning, it is better to be even more specific about the services you provide.

The range of tender opportunities is broad, and so the closer your products or services match the buyer's requirements, the higher you are likely to score on the tender response (because you will more easily be able to demonstrate you know what you are talking about!).

If we take cleaning as an example, are you offering standard cleaning for offices and schools, bespoke decontamination cleaning for police cells, or do you offer specialised window cleaning in high rise buildings or provide deep cleaning of medical instruments. Alternatively, are you supplying cleaning equipment or cleaning products?



## 2 Search for tender opportunities that are currently available

Having a look at what is out there will allow you to see what the public sector organisations are buying and what their procurement teams are looking for. Once you find some appropriate tender opportunities, go to the portal and download all the documents, making sure you read through these carefully, particularly the specification. Then ask yourself:

- Is your business currently able to provide the specified requirements?
- How effective and efficient is your current provision?
- If you don't currently meet all of the need, what can you do to fill the gaps?
- Do you need additional accreditations? New MI systems? Upgrade policies?

This then creates your action list on 'getting tender ready' and into position to take on your competitors.

# STEPS TO MAXIMISE SUCCESS

## 3 Review the awarded tenders within your area

By looking at the awarded tenders, i.e. contract award notices, you can look at who has been successful in the past. Contract award notices provide useful information on the winning bidder, as well as the type and size of contract won.

Understanding who your competitors are and where they are winning will help contracts build your competitor analysis. It is a great way to build business confidence if you know 'we could do better than them - and look at the size of the contract they've just won!'

If you find larger companies are winning contracts that include your services, there may also be the opportunity to approach them to sub-contract this new work to you e.g. Recruitment Managed Service Provider contract which includes a preferred sub-contractor/supplier list. This is a great way to build up your experience and establish strong case studies when you are ready to tender yourself.

## 4 Evaluate where your business is and where it needs to be for tender success

Now that you are clear on what you are offering and the arena you are competing in, it's crucial that you take time to evaluate what you need to be successful. Businesses can often be inclined to jump straight in at this point, but experience tells us that taking time to get your 'ducks in a row' will save you time and money down the road.

Things to look at here include:

- References
- Testimonials and case studies
- Management Information Systems
- Organisation chart
- Staff profiles
- Financial accounts
- Insurances
- Accreditations and qualifications
- Policies and procedures
- Staff training log
- Social value commitments



# STEPS TO MAXIMISE SUCCESS

## 5 Identify your core tendering team members

If you are a small business, it may well be you and you alone! But, if you have a larger team you will want to manage the work most effectively to achieve the highest quality tender, which might include spreading the work across core disciplines. Even if you decide not to write the bids and outsource them to experts, it's key that this core team is defined so subject matter specialists can be asked about the questions pertinent to their areas of knowledge and experience.

At this point, if you are looking to outsource tender writing to a specialist team, start looking ahead of time. It's important that you have time to find the right company for you and that you also give the company chosen plenty of time to do the initial discovery they will need to complete before getting in to the details of individual responses.



## 6 Set up a process to monitor open tender opportunities and make yes/no bid decisions

Once you are in a position to start looking for tender opportunities you need to decide how you are going to monitor opportunities as and when they arise to make sure you don't miss them, and make quick decisions on whether to pursue them or not. You don't want to leave this to chance and find your perfect opportunity only for it to be too late to submit a strong response.





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