

## Identifying Barriers to Winning Council Business May 2010

Questionnaires were issued to 1677 businesses and the council received 226 responses representing a 13.4% return rate. The questionnaire included questions relating to respective organisations and also invited feedback on potential areas where improvement could be made.

The following is a summary of responses.

**Business Type** : no. of responses - 208

	Response Percent	Response Count
Sole Trader	29.8%	62
Partnership	3.4%	7
Limited Company	63.0%	131
Social Enterprise	0.0%	0
Voluntary Organisation	2.4%	5
Other (please specify)	1.4%	3

Of the 196 businesses who identified their business sector, there were 185 different sectors including: Recruitment ; Removals ; Haulage & Storage ; Computer Services and Computer Software Development ; Marketing ; Cleaning Services ; Training ; Supply of tyres and associated services ; Property ; Engineering, Gardening ; Lawnmowers & Garden Machinery ; Architectural Services ; Catering ; Plumbing ; Media ; Flooring and Security.

**Turnover** : no. of responses - 206

<£100,000	38.3%	79
£101,000 - £200,000	19.4%	40
£201,000 - £400,000	9.2%	19
£401,000 - £800,000	10.2%	21
£800,000+	22.8%	47

**Number of employees** : no. of responses - 207

<10	74.4%	154
11-50	18.8%	39
51-250	5.8%	12
250+	1.0%	2

**Any barriers to accepting e mailed orders** : no of responses – 220

Yes	0.0%	0
No	100.0%	220

**Any barriers to accessing & completing tender opportunities online** : no. of responses - 218

Yes	3.7%	8
No	96.3%	210

**Currently registered with tendering websites** : no. of responses - 99

Public Contracts Scotland	92.9%	92
Constructionline	18.2%	18
Exel	7.1%	7
Tenders Electronic Daily	6.1%	6

For those businesses who have traded with the council, although there was strong satisfaction regarding roles and responsibilities, performance measures and helpfulness of

staff, we will investigate and work to improve the contract management process and arrange regular meetings where appropriate.

As West Lothian Council value the opinions of customers and potential customers and will endeavour to facilitate improvement where possible, to this extent, an action plan will be produced to ensure that progress is made.

However, I am able to advise that we are already taking action:

You said	We did
Not always obvious who to contact for new work	<p>Details of all Procurement Services staff are now available at <a href="http://www.westlothian.com/Home/business_opportunities/council_contracts/">http://www.westlothian.com/Home/business_opportunities/council_contracts/</a></p> <p>We welcome enquiries and you may wish to contact us by e mail at <a href="mailto:procurementservices@westlothian.gov.uk">procurementservices@westlothian.gov.uk</a> or by telephone : 01506 281801.</p>
<p>Unaware of contract opportunities Can you inform me of any contracts in the future Suggest lower value contracts have more streamlined processes to encourage new entrants Unsure if I have to identify low value tenders opportunities from web or if there is a list from which purchasers of low value services can choose from 3 or 4 likely sourced companies.</p>	A new method for advertising low value contracts is about to be trialled and further details will be announced imminently.
<p>e procurement does not seem to include opportunities for us. Accessing and completing tender opportunities online time consuming and complicated I would be interested in attending an e tender workshop</p>	A number of practical training events are to be organised to demystify process.
<p>I've never heard of Pubic Procurement Rules. Lack of knowledge about procedures. As a relatively new company we can not provide all the information required by the PQQ documentation i.e. 3 years accounts etc. and this would appear to be a barrier to being invited to tender. The use of PQQ's is now being rendered redundant as so many companies get through the process that you end up tendering against 10 companies. We were told that we were not on the list therefore, we could not tender for work. As I am small business, I do not need to be registered on tendering websites.</p>	A series of public procurement presentations and workshops are to be organised during Autumn/Winter 2010.
<p>It is extremely difficult to speak to someone who understands your question. There is insufficient help at the council to assist with the tendering process. Not computer literate and cost to employ help to tender significant.</p>	<p>A public procurement clinic is now operational and takes place on the first Thursday of each month from 2 to 4pm at the Enterprise Centre in Livingston.</p> <p>Although you can simply turn up without an appointment, you are advised to book a slot by phoning 01506 777400 or emailing <a href="mailto:bgateway@westlothian.gov.uk">bgateway@westlothian.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>A Meet the Buyer Event would be beneficial Face to face contact with the buyers would be of benefit. I am a small business and am not sure how to approach the council for tender...Maybe too small a business</p>	A Meet the Buyer Event is being arranged for Autumn 2010 and information will be made available in due course.
<p>One of the biggest barriers is the lack of interest in benefiting from correct quality and reduced "whole life cost" compared to perceived low cost prices Ensure officials are fully aware of the true aims and objectives of social enterprise and understand the difference they bring to the table - not just price or social objectives but social capital. Ensure more consideration to local suppliers who have proven track record of excellent provision and relationships with the end user and not suppliers who over sell a cheap price and under deliver on service and have no interest in customer relationships Contracts are evaluated on price alone or are weighted too heavily on price No attempt by staff to purchase from local companies</p>	The council's Procurement Strategy contains an objective to ensure that council procurement is undertaken with consideration for the environment and social aspects of procurement and to extend the principles of sustainable development. The council is currently in the process of seeking consultation on a draft Sustainable Procurement Policy and Strategy and it is hoped that this will be operational by Autumn 2010.