



**GREATER MANCHESTER
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

HOW TO DO BUSINESS GUIDE

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1. **Introduction**

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) has to buy a large range of goods, services and works to enable it to deliver an effective service to the citizens of Greater Manchester.

Its current expenditure on goods and services is approximately £14m per annum. (update from Spikes)

The aim of this guide is to help companies understand how the GMFRS procures its goods, services and works.

These purchases are sought under competition and the guide cannot assure individual companies of success. However, it should provide you with the necessary information to bid for GMFRS business.

Within this guide there is information and advice on the following areas:

- Procurement within GMFRS
- Finding out about our contracts
- European Union (EU) tender procedures
- Applying for advertised contracts
- Tendering process
- What we would expect from you as a supplier to GMFRS
- Useful links and contact details

2. **Procurement within Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service**

Procurement within GMFRS must comply with UK law, EU Directives (International law) and the Authority's Standing Orders and Conditions of Contract (Procurement rules).

GMFRS is a partner to the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) and will utilise their and other consortia contracts wherever possible for non fire service specific supplies and services.

GMFRS follows procedures which:

- Are ethical, environmentally friendly, accountable and compliant with procedural and legal obligations.
- Achieve continuing improvement in value for money, based on the whole life costs and quality
- Help to improve the competitiveness of suppliers and wherever possible support the local economy and smaller supplier.

The EU procurement laws are in place to ensure there is no discrimination, equal treatment of all potential bidders/suppliers, fair competition and all arrangements are open and transparent.

If procurement is below the EU limits it is subject to the Authority's procurement rules which again, as with the EU directives, are there to ensure no discrimination and fair competition for all.

Procurement in GMFRS is conducted by several individuals in different Departments across the Authority dependent on the nature of the purchase.

3. Finding out about our contracts

There are a number of different ways to find out about new GMFRS contracts. It will depend on the value of the contract and the particular goods, services or works being procured.

3.1 Below EU limits

If procurement is below EU limits it is still subject to the Authority's Standing Orders. For low value purchases officers will use existing supplier records, directories and information supplied by potential suppliers.

If you wish to be considered it is worth writing to the Authority with details of your company and its products or services. Any relevant sales literature will be retained although there may not be an immediate requirement for your goods or services.

3.1.1 Contracts between £5,000 and £75,000

GMFRS does not normally advertise contracts below £75,000 in total. Departments must obtain a minimum of three written competitive quotations.

3.1.2 Contracts between £75,000 and EU Threshold

Any contract that has a total value of between £75,000 and the EU threshold will be advertised in the local press and/or relevant Trade journal. The advert will invite expressions of interest or tenders for the business. The Authority also is a user of the Emergency Services Bluelight eTendering system and prospective suppliers should consider registering as this will give access to potential business with a large number of emergency services. Further details from www.bluelight.gov.uk

3.1.3 Contracts over EU Threshold

Any contract that has a total value above the EU Threshold must be advertised in the OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union)

3.1.4 Select lists of contractors

Select lists are used by some Departments within GMFRS to procure goods, services and works. Below EU procurement threshold values, select lists are

reviewed at intervals not exceeding five years. Contractors can be added and deleted by approval of the Authority.

Contractors wishing to apply to be placed on a particular list should respond to the advertisements, which will be placed in the various trade journals and local newspapers. The advertisement will ask for expressions of interest and state the requirements of contractors wishing to apply.

Above EU procurement threshold levels, advertisements will also be placed in the OJEU, in accordance with the EU rules. In such circumstances, the maximum duration of the select list is four years.

The Estates and Buildings Department retain select lists of contractors for procurement of services and works.

3.2 Above EU Thresholds

If the contract value is above the EU thresholds, currently £140,000 then a contract notice must be placed in OJEU.

There are a number of commercial organisations that, for a subscription fee, will search OJEU for you and provide regular lists of contracts in which you may be interested. Details of some of these organisations can be found in the useful links section.

4. EU Tender procedures

Under the EU regulations there are three types of tender procedure available to buyers.

4.1 Open Procedure

This particular procedure allows companies to apply without prior selection. The timescale for the open procedure is that companies have 45 days to return tenders.

4.2 Restricted Procedure

This particular procedure is a two stage process. Companies will be shortlisted to receive tenders once they have passed certain pre-selection criteria. The shortlist is approved by Elected Members.

The minimum timescales for the restricted procedure are 32 days for companies to register an interest and 35 days from despatch of tender to its return. The EU timescales are shortened by the use of an eTendering system

4.3 Negotiated procedure

In this procedure only selected suppliers are invited to negotiate contracts. This is only available in a very limited number of circumstances and is subject to strict conditions.

5. Applying for advertised contracts

The contract notice or advertisement will invite companies to submit an expression of interest for a contract. Once expressions of interest have been received companies may be required to submit supporting information either via a pre qualification questionnaire (PQQ) or within the invitation to tender (ITT) package.

It is important that suppliers provide all the information requested and respond by the due date otherwise they may be rejected from the process.

The type of information required may include all or some of the following:

- Company details
- Financial information
- Management and business structure
- Resources and staff training
- Quality assurance
- Environmental matters
- Insurance cover
- Equality and diversity policies
- Health and safety practices
- References

6. Tendering process

The next stage, after a company has replied to an OJEU notice or advertisement, is the supplier will either be sent an ITT (if the open tender procedure has been used) or a PQQ.

GMFRS is currently using the Bluelight eTendering process in common with a number of Emergency Services. (see link at the end of this document). Suppliers can register on this system free of charge.

The responses from the completed PQQ will be used to assess whether the company can meet the authority's requirements for that particular contract. If the company can meet the relevant requirements they will be shortlisted and will receive an invitation to tender (ITT) package.

Within the ITT there will normally be as a minimum:

- A letter of invitation outlining details of all the documents in the invitation to tender package and the closing date for return of tenders.
- General Conditions of Contract.
- Supplementary terms and conditions specific to the particular goods, services or works being tendered for.
- Specification
- Pricing schedule

It is essential tenders are returned on time and by the method indicated in the tender advertisement. Any tenders received after the closing date and time will be disqualified.

The returned tenders will all be opened at the same time and evaluated against the criteria detailed in the tender documentation.

Both the successful and unsuccessful suppliers will be notified in writing following the award of the contract by Elected Members of the Authority.

In respect of EU tenders there will be a minimum 10 day standstill period from award of contract to commencement.

If requested suppliers will have the opportunity to have a contract debrief meeting. The contract debrief is an opportunity for companies to find out why they were unsuccessful and where they need to improve to help make their bid more successful next time.

Please note each contract is dealt with on an individual basis. Both successful and unsuccessful companies are not automatically considered for any other contract.

7 What will be expected of you when working for the GMFRS

There are procedures in place for monitoring the performance of all firms carrying out contracts for GMFRS. Your firm must be capable of delivering the requirements of the contract. Failure to perform could lead to your suspension or deletion from any approved list.

8. Useful links

A number of websites provide practical sources of information on everything from EU procurement to public sector tendering information.

Below are some you may find useful:

<http://ted.publications.eu.int>

Tenders electronic daily – the on-line version of the supplement to the Official Journal of the European Union

<http://simap.eu.int>

SIMAP – for information on public sector electronic procurement

www.bipsolutions.com

Business Information Solutions Ltd provides public sector contract information

www.tenders.co.uk

Tenders is a searchable database of European public sector contracts

www.tendersdirect.co.uk

Tenders direct is a searchable database of public sector contracts

www.ogc.gov.uk

The Government's procurement website provided by the Office for Government Commerce

www.businesslink.org

Business Link provides information and guidance on running your business

www.bluelight.gov.uk

eTendering system provider and useful source of information for contracts within Emergency Services

www.supply2.gov.uk

Supplier route to Government

For any enquiries in respect of this Guide or procurement within the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service please contact the Procurement Section by email at procurement@manchesterfire.gov.uk

This information has been provided by the GMFRS's Procurement and Logistics Department. Its role is to develop and implement a procurement strategy and purchasing policy across the Authority

For further information please contact the email address above or write to:

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service
Procurement and Logistics Department
Technical Services Centre
St Helens Road
Leigh
Wigan
WN7 3PA

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