



Lanarkshire Meet the “Real” Buyer

www.sdpscotland.co.uk

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Overview

This report covers the activities and outcomes from the Lanarkshire Meet the “Real” Buyer event, which took place on 22 February 2023 at the Banqueting Suite at South Lanarkshire Council in Hamilton.

Jointly hosted by North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire Councils, and supported by Supplier Development Programme, the Lanarkshire Meet the “Real” Buyer event afforded suppliers that want to do business in Lanarkshire unprecedented access to leading contractors and local authority services that commission the actual work. As part of this event, suppliers could learn more about upcoming contracts, raise their profile as a business, and prepare for upcoming contract opportunities. There was no formal agenda; the format was kept as straightforward as possible to allow for maximum number of conversations and networking to take place on the day.

Businesses met procurement teams from some other public and private sector organisations and had access to “real” buyers at North and South Lanarkshire Councils with services like:

- IT, Finance and Corporate
- Construction and Professional Services
- Social Care and Education
- Cleaning and Catering
- Waste, Environmental and Grounds
- Roads and Fleet
- Leisure and Culture

Supplier Registration and Attendance

In total, 632 suppliers pre-registered interest on the SDP website for the Lanarkshire Meet the “Real” Buyer event. There were 337 actual attendees on the day. Of those, 254 attendees were from 200 unique Scottish SME businesses. Of those, 46 unique Scottish SMEs were based in North Lanarkshire Council and 78 unique Scottish SMEs were based in South Lanarkshire Council.

Buyer Exhibitions

Businesses of all sizes had the opportunity to meet additional exhibitors including the Supplier Development Programme, Federation of Small Businesses, Scottish Procurement Alliance, PfH Scotland, Scotland Excel, hub South West Scotland Ltd and Business Gateway Lanarkshire. The economic development teams were also available on the day.

Supplier Survey Feedback

An online survey was distributed to all registered suppliers for the Tayside Meet the Buyer event. The survey was live between 23 February to 13 April 2023. Within this time, 40 responses were received from suppliers of all sizes.

The post-event survey highlighted that 94% of Scottish SMEs were more likely to bid for public sector contracts after participating in the Lanarkshire Meet the “Real” Buyer event.

Scottish SME suppliers that responded to the survey also rated the Lanarkshire Meet the “Real” Buyer event as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’ in several areas:

- 73% - representation of public sector buyers and decision makers.
- 71% - rated the overall experience excellent or good.
- 56% of respondents thought the Lanarkshire Meet the “Real” Buyer event demonstrated that public sector procurement is open and transparent.

When considering the Scottish Government’s commitment to becoming a Net Zero society by 2045:

- 82% of respondents were aware of the Scottish Government’s commitment to achieving a Net Zero society.
- 59% of respondents said they have an existing policy to support a reduction in its carbon footprint, and 76% said they have an implementation plan to reduce its carbon footprint.
- 35% said that carbon reducing/reaching Net Zero targets is a priority right now in 2023 for the business.
- 59% said Net Zero is a priority in future business plans, while 6% said Net Zero is not a business priority.

Regarding support received from the Supplier Development Programme through participation in previous SDP training/or events, Scottish SMEs thought:

- 41% of respondents had participated in SDP training and/or events.
- 100% said that SDP training/or events helped their business to build confidence around tendering.
- 57% said that SDP training/or events helped their business to improve tendering skills.

Some comments from suppliers included:

- “We found today very informative as our company progresses its way as a local supplier towards tendering for various opportunities within both North/South Lanarkshire Councils.”
- “The jargon used in SDP and other sites is too complicated as myself and a colleague found it impossible to find what specific buyers were attending and more information is needed on what areas are covered.”
- Ultimately, if it’s for the construction industry, fine. But if you want charities to use these systems these need to be shifted to also accommodate them. Even if it is just for construction, you’d also stand to benefit from allowing for spaces to talk about community benefit otherwise these stipulations on big contracts will continue to have diminished or shallow impacts.”
- “Generality appeared that those in attendance we engaged in the “procurement” process as opposed to any real view of the social provision priorities of the potential buyers. There was a total lack of health representation (bar some care-home opportunities) and no apparent 3rd sector interphase involvement at all.”
- This event and the buyers were more interested in larger scale companies who can take in whole contracts rather than providing specific expertise or products.”

General Learnings

SDP provided exhibitor training in advance of Meet the Buyer on top tips for supplier engagement, which was well received by commissioners at both local authorities, and particularly by staff that had never been to an event of this kind previously. However, comments from suppliers show that more support on interpersonal communication may be required as staff attending these events were asked to not assume any prior knowledge and some suppliers felt staff should have been more patient and less dismissive during discussions.

There may also be additional benefit to providing a supplier-side training webinar, in advance of future events, in addition to the many resources on how to prepare for Meet the Buyer that are currently offered by SDP, as many suppliers did not seem to understand how to find the buyers that they were looking for on the day.

Exhibitor Survey Feedback

An online survey was distributed to all exhibitors after the event. The survey was live between 23 February to 13 April 2023. Within this time, 31 responses were received.

Regarding Lanarkshire Meet the “Real” Buyer, exhibitors thought:

- 94% - rated the ability to engage with new suppliers during the event as good or excellent (3% neither good nor poor, 3% not relevant)
- 100% - rated the event location as good or excellent
- 90% - rated the overall on the day experience as good or excellent (10% neither good nor poor)
- 90% - rated the overall experience as good or excellent (10% neither good nor poor)
- 86% - rated the messaging/theme on being an event aimed at boosting supplier engagement in the Lanarkshire region as good or excellent
- 97% - would participate in this event in the future
- 97% - would recommend this event to other public sector buyers, private contractors with supply chains, and business support organisations

Some comments from exhibitors included:

- “This was my first type of event like this. SDP made everything clear and straight forward. Training session prior was helpful to attend and gave a good idea of what to expect.”
- “The event was well attended by suppliers, which provided exhibitors the opportunity to engage with many supplier representatives, learning of developments within the specified market. A worthwhile event which I hope is replicated in future years.”
- “Excellent event for engaging with new suppliers.”
- “Busy and engaging session, a good buzz about the place.”

Promotion through the Supplier Development Programme

Social Media Analytics

The Supplier Development Programme has a robust social media presence on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, which is utilised to promote contract opportunities and engagement events regularly to Scottish businesses. In advance of the Lanarkshire Meet the “Real”

Buyer event, SDP promoted the event across its social media channels. The campaign ran from 20 December to 21 February and collectively, 20 posts earned 4,521 impressions (the number of times users saw a post) and 244 engagements (the total times a user interacted with a post). At its highest, the engagement rate was at 10.14%.

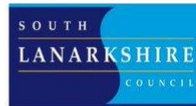


Lanarkshire Meet the "Real" Buyer

Banqueting Hall • South Lanarkshire Council

Wednesday, 22 February • 10:00am - 2:00pm

Register Free: www.sdpscotland.co.uk



Newsletters/Mailings

The Inverclyde Council Meet the Buyer was announced in SDP's January monthly newsletter which received 216 clicks. The event was also featured in SDP's February newsletter, which received 276 clicks.

Contact

More information on the Supplier Development Programme can be found at www.sdpscotland.co.uk and on social media via [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).