



Meet the Buyer 2021: Live Virtual Event Outcomes

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The Supplier Development Programme has published an online report on the Meet the Buyer 2021: Live Virtual Event which took place on 8 June 2021. The Scottish Government and Scotland Excel were headline partners of this event.

Meet the Buyer 2021 allowed suppliers to engage with virtual exhibitors from the public sector, private contractors, and business support providers. This was scheduled in an alternative format, as a virtual event, to support efforts towards economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

The free virtual event affords suppliers unprecedented access to buyers and decision makers from across the Public and Private sector, with the opportunity to raise their profile as a business and prepare for upcoming contract opportunities.

Suppliers were encouraged to sign up to register interest in the overall event through a widespread promotional campaign in partnership with SDP's membership organisations and valued partners. Pre-event communications related to the Power of Procurement and Let's Do Net Zero were promoted by Public Contracts Scotland to registered suppliers on PCS at SDP's request. SDP also promoted the event through a small paid social media campaign aimed at SME business owners through Facebook and Twitter.

Registration and Attendance

In total, 2,051 suppliers pre-registered interest on the SDP website for the Meet the Buyer 2021: Live Virtual Event. There were 1161 actual attendees on the day, including both exhibitors and individual suppliers. 822 suppliers logged in during the Meet the Buyer 2021 event (650 Scottish SME unique businesses). There were 36 virtual stands, which included not only public sector buyers but also some supply chain contractors, including: RJ McLeod, Robertson Facilities Management, and Morrison Construction.

Through the 1-2-1 exhibitor meeting on the portal, we collectively achieved 29,574 minutes of video interaction.

The post-event survey highlighted that 91% of Scottish SMEs responding to the survey said they were more likely to bid for public contracts after participating on the virtual event.

Formal Agenda

There was a Keynote Address by SDP Chair, Councillor Heather Brannan-McVey and a Welcome from Ivan McKee MSP, Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism & Enterprise to open the online event.

At Meet the Buyer 2021, there were three themed virtual stages. Each had a slightly different timetable, with in-built time for visiting the virtual exhibition hall. The stages were called the [Inclusive Growth Stage](#), [Sustainability and Innovation Stage](#) and [Community Wealth Building \(Supply Chain\) Stage](#).

Many of the pre-recorded presentations were followed by a live Question and Answer session where suppliers were given opportunity to ask any questions they had.

The Supplier Development Programme also delivered a dedicated workshop session entitled, "Helping You Bid Better: Live Q&A Panel with the Supplier Development Programme," which can be viewed on the [SDP YouTube Channel](#).

Supplier Feedback Survey

An online survey was distributed to registered delegates for Meet the Buyer 2021. This survey was live between 8 June and 21 June 2021. Within this time, responses were received from 148 suppliers, 111 of which were from businesses based in Scotland and 98 of these were from Scottish SMEs, supported businesses and third sector organisations.

In total, 92% of respondents based in Scotland attended the online event on 8 June. It was highlighted that 66% of respondents were an SME, supported business or third sector organisation in Scotland and therefore are eligible for other SDP training and support.

The post-event survey highlighted that 91% of Scottish SMEs responding to the survey said they were more likely to bid for public contracts after participating in the event.

Scottish SME supplier responses rated the Meet the Buyer 2021: Live Virtual Event as "excellent" or "good" for the following:

- Overall event experience – 88%
- Usability of the virtual portal – 88%

Additionally, 79% of these respondents thought the Meet the Buyer 2021: Live Virtual Event demonstrated that public sector procurement is open and transparent, despite challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some comments from suppliers included:

- "The opportunity to engage on a 1-2-1 basis online was so much more beneficial than when holding a public event, as we got to have a conversation without the usual distractions."
- "I think there is sufficient information being given by the public sector about their buying needs and preferences. And I believe this is helping suppliers to better understand the buyer and to design products which are fit for purpose and are value for money."
- "I thought the queuing system to speak to exhibitors was excellent. I had more success in meeting the people I wanted than I would have had at a live event where the crowd can get in the way."

Exhibitor Feedback Survey

An online survey was distributed to registered exhibitors after Meet the Buyer 2021. This survey was live between 8 June and 21 June 2021. Within this time, responses were received from 60 respondents.

The post-event survey highlighted that 78% of the exhibitors that responded to the survey and the overall experience was "excellent" or "good" and 95% said they would likely participate in a future virtual Meet the Buyer event organised by SDP.

In total, 97% of exhibitors said they would recommend this event to other public sector buyers, private contractors with supply chains and business support organisations.

Exhibitor respondents indicated that the virtual event helped to achieve several goals, including:

- 89% said Meet the Buyer 2021 drove early engagement with SDP member organisations to support an increase of public sector contracts being accessible to Scottish SMEs;
- 95% said Meet the Buyer 2021 raised the profile of the Supplier Development Programme to be recognised and established as the foremost tender training programme to support SMEs and third sector in Scotland;
- 93% said Meet the Buyer 2021 extended SDP engagement with public sector buyers to ensure SMEs benefit from local contracts; and
- 86% said Meet the Buyer 2021 demonstrated that public sector procurement is open and transparent, despite the challenges during COVID-19 pandemic.

Some comments from exhibiting buyers included:

- “I found the event very interesting and informative and prompted thoughts on how best to engage with SDP in the future to ensure contracting (and sub-contracting) opportunities are accessible to all local companies regardless of size or past experience of delivering public sector contracts.”
- “I think the virtual event was good, all the relevant information was accessible on our stand for anyone to download. It made the actual conversations with potential suppliers clearer and more productive.”
- “Great event.”
- “This is an excellent way of engaging with suppliers, especially given the way we are working at the moment as we are unable to have face-to-face meetings in the office.”
- “Fantastic platform that ensures engagement in the end-to-end marketplace. Meet the Buyer 2021 was one of the best virtual events I have attended.”
- “It was a really good way to talk to suppliers. It was a much better experience dealing with them one-to-one and face-to-face (virtually) rather than crowds of people flocking round you and you can't give people your undivided attention.”

All feedback from suppliers and buyers is valuable and will be applied to future virtual events organised by the Supplier Development Programme. Thank you to everyone who took the time to participate.

Technical Limitations

With three virtual stages, this was the biggest fully virtual, online “Meet the Buyer” event ever organised by the Supplier Development Programme to date and was organised this way due to the on-going exceptional circumstances presented from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Supplier Development Programme created “how-to” videos for both suppliers and buyers to introduce them to the online portal and outlined what was required from a technical viewpoint. SDP also created joining instructions and conducted speaker and exhibitor training in advance of the virtual event, where buyers were able to ask questions to the event

management team. SDP also ensured there was a dedicated email address for exhibitors to contact and staffed SDP's 'info@sdpscotland.co.uk' inbox in the lead up to and on the day of the virtual event. Hundreds of enquires were received and responded to by the micro team at SDP.

To address these issues after the event, exhibiting organisations were provided with full business details of all actual attendees, in line with the terms and conditions and privacy policy on the SDP website. SDP also published all presentations on the SDP YouTube Channel. Once attendees responded to the supplier feedback survey, they were able to access the videos.

Overall Analytics – Social Media

From 30 April to close of play 8 June 2021, 80 tweets were sent from the SDP Scotland Twitter account to promote the Meet the Buyer 2021: Live Virtual Event. The tweets collectively earned 67,407 impressions (the number of times users saw a Tweet on Twitter) and 858 engagements (total number of times a user interacted with a Tweet). The tweets earned 161 retweets, 236 likes and 6 replies.

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](#).