



Meet the Buyer 2019
Supplier Feedback Report
13 November 2019
Hampden Park, Glasgow

Last updated: 4 February 2020
Prepared by: Supplier Development Programme



MEET THE BUYER HISTORY IN NUMBERS



90% Respondents said they were more likely to bid for public sector contracts after attending Meet the Buyer 2019



Summary

Meet the Buyer 2019 was held on 13 November 2019 at Hampden Park, Glasgow. Headline partners included the Scottish Government and Scotland Excel. The largest number of registrations to date were received: 2,623 suppliers registered, and more than 1,100 attended to interact with 69 exhibition stalls, representing 74 organisations. The event had on the whole very positive feedback from respondents, with **82% rating it as Excellent or Good** and **90% more likely to bid for public sector contracts** as a result of attending.

90%

Respondents said they were **more likely to bid for public sector contracts** after attending **Meet the Buyer 2019**

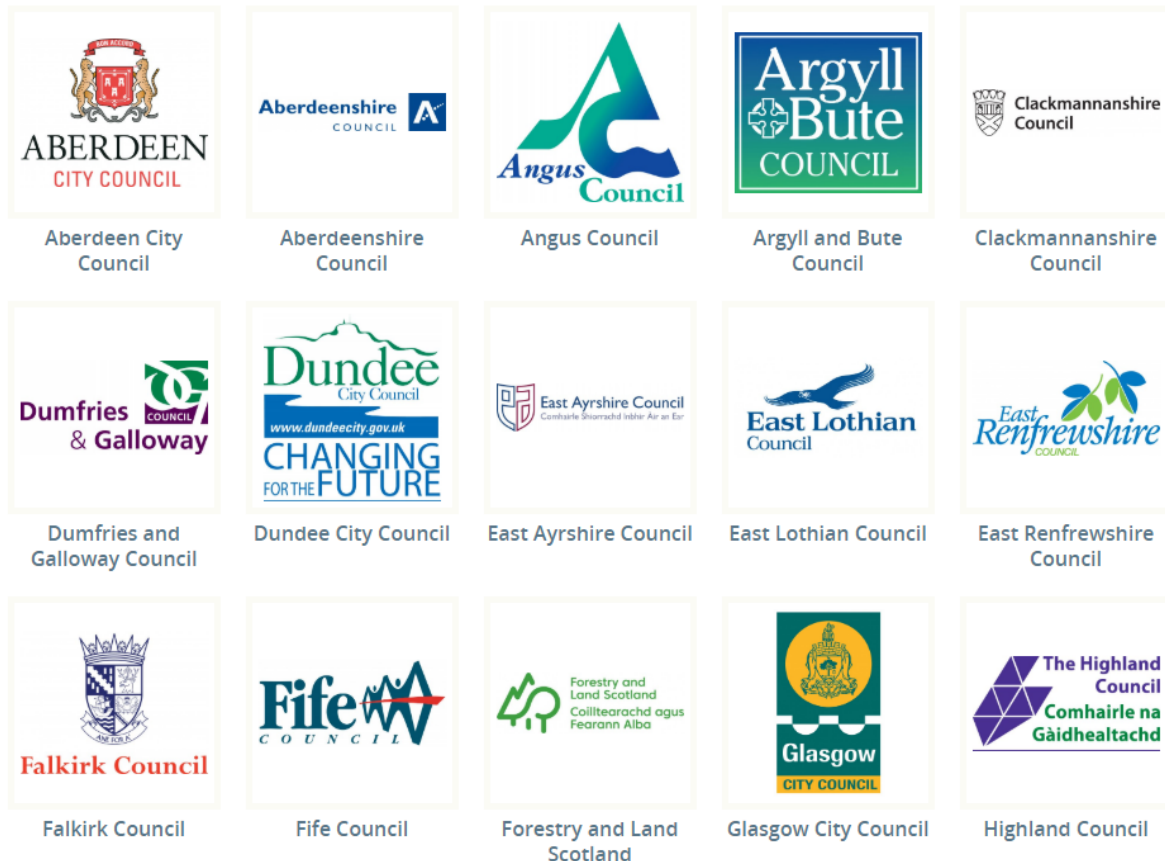
Meet the Buyer 2019 was opened by Councillor Heather Brannan-McVey, Chair of the Supplier Development Programme. Several presentations were delivered throughout the day, including:

- Scotland Excel: Delivering Social Value through Procurement, delivered by Jenny Bowles, Category Manager for Building and Consultancy;
- Delivering Benefits for Communities through £700 million Annual Spend: How SMEs can Engage with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, delivered by Gordon Beattie, Head of Procurement, Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board;
- Productivity Clubs Programme (SCDI), delivered by Ashleigh McCulloch, Productivity Clubs Programme Manager;
- Scottish Government Cyber Resilience, delivered by Paul Chapman - Head of Public Sector Cyber Resilience;
- How to do Business with Sellafield Ltd, delivered by John Berry, Supply Chain Manager; and
- SELECT: New Fire Detection Regulations and Fire Alarm Systems in Scotland, delivered by Mark McLaughlin, Technical Adviser.

Additionally, two workshops from the Supplier Development Programme were delivered on “Introduction to Tendering” and “Improving Your Bid Score.” All presentations were delivered in the Auditorium at Hampden Park, which has a capacity of 250 seated. One attendee remarked, “I learnt about PCS and PCS-T in ways that I hadn't been using it. We got a great insight into how local authorities procure architecture work, didn't know that either.” Another said, “Great speakers, and workshops very informative.”

The busiest presentations were delivered in the morning, and SDP training was standing room only, which suggests that there is an appetite to increase this offering at future events. All presentations made on the day, as well as an overall Meet the Buyer 2019 promotional film, are available on the SDP YouTube Channel and www.sdpscotland.co.uk.

Local Authorities and SDP Member Organisations



Local Authorities and SDP Member Organisations



Historic Environment
Scotland



Inverclyde Council



National Records of
Scotland



North Ayrshire
Council



North Lanarkshire
Council



Registers of Scotland



Renfrewshire Council



Scottish Enterprise



Scottish Fire and
Rescue Service



Scottish Government
- Third Sector Unit



Scottish Parliament



Scottish Procurement
Alliance



SELECT



South Ayrshire
Council



South Lanarkshire
Council



Stirling Council



West Dunbartonshire
Council



West Lothian Council

Premium Exhibitors



Dounreay



Magnox



Multiplex
Construction Europe
Ltd



Roadbridge UK
Limited



Scotland Excel



Zero Waste Scotland

Supplier Backgrounds

An online survey was distributed to registered delegates for Meet the Buyer 2019 for three weeks, from 18 November to 10 December 2019. Responses were received from 206 respondents.

Of all respondents, 73% were a SME, charity, or third sector organisation, and are therefore eligible for other SDP training and support. This is around the same as at Meet the Buyer 2018 (75%).

The largest council area represented was Glasgow City Council with 25% of respondents based there, by far the largest of all the council areas. Attendance by City of Edinburgh based suppliers was 6%, down 9% from Meet the Buyer 2018 (which was held in Edinburgh). There were quite a few respondents whose business was based in the wider UK outside of Scotland.

There were a few business sectors that were most prominent among the respondents – 17% were based in construction, 10% were based in manufacturing, and 20% selected “other” as a sector.

A significant majority of respondents (64%) heard about Meet the Buyer 2019 through SDP’s website and newsletter (an 8% increase from 2018), almost half of the respondents heard about it through Public Contracts Scotland’s website and email (48%). Only 4% heard about it through social media and 2% through local press.

Nine respondents said though they had pre-registered for the event, they did not attend Meet the Buyer 2019. Four were too busy, three had an unexpected business appointment, two felt there was a lack of information from SDP, and one decided it was not relevant for them.

Supplier Experience

Respondents appeared to be highly satisfied with the booking process, with 97% rating it as Excellent or Good. Additionally, 93% thought pre-event communication was Excellent or Good (3% thought it was not relevant). Social media communication was praised, with 61% rating it as Excellent or Good (35% said it was not relevant).

The response to the Exhibition was very positive, with 85% rating it as Excellent or Good. A high percentage (54%) deemed the keynote speakers not relevant to rate, but amongst those who did, 43% rated it Excellent or Good. Similarly, 38% said the workshops were Excellent or Good (leaving aside the 58% who said it was not relevant to rate). However, 25% of all respondents also said it was the least important part of the event, compared with meeting local authorities which 57% said was the most important part of the event.

Catering had a more mixed response, with 30% stating it was Excellent or Good, while 33% said it was Poor or Very Poor (for 37%, it was not relevant to rate). The venue and facilities received a better response, however, with 85% rating it Excellent or Good.

Unfortunately, there was an issue with registration by SDP's appointed event management company on the day of Meet the Buyer 2019. This resulted in the following:

- Long queues, compounded by cold weather;
- Lengthy wait times for attendees at registration; and
- Loss of registration data for some attendees.

Within the qualitative feedback, numerous respondents raised the issue with registration that was experienced at the venue on the day, stating it soured the experience with the delays to entering. SDP will ensure there is a robust back up system in place for registration for future events.

As a result of the registration issues, and while the number of attendees is 1,164 on SDP's official data tally, SDP estimates that there were around 1,500 actual attendees on the day. However, for audit purposes, SDP will report the lower registration number, which can be evidenced, for all official purposes.

Overall, the event received a highly positive response from those surveyed, with 82% rating it as Excellent or Good. Attending Meet the Buyer had real practical benefits for the overwhelming majority of respondents, with 90% saying they were now more likely to bid for public sector contracts.

“You will probably have had many complaints in relation to registering, on entry to the exhibition. I’m aware it may have been out with your control, but the queuing was out of control and it was very cold. I waited an hour in total. Overall would have been excellent otherwise.”

“Excellent event, well organised and well attended.”

“Very helpful event and well organised.”

Of all respondents, 72% were also interested in attending further SDP training events, and topics of interest included:

- Finding contract opportunities (72% of respondents)
- Quick Quotes (60% of respondents)
- Frameworks (55% of respondents)
- Seeking feedback and improving your bid score (47% of respondents)
- Using the PCS website (43% of respondents)
- Tender related policy (40% of respondents)

"Great speakers and workshops very informative."

"I enjoyed most the opportunity to speak to key organisations all under the one roof."

"I went prepared as advised by SDP, was specific about what I was promoting, and engagement was positive."

"I attended mainly to network with difficult to reach key influencers within my business sector."

"I thought the list of workshops relevant and the event generally had a good buzz."

"I learnt about PCS and PCS-T in ways that I hadn't been using it."

"Made some useful contacts – liked most that there were buyers willing to be frank about their procurement."

"Excellent event and well planned - looking forward to the next event in Edinburgh."

"Most helpful exhibition I've honestly ever been to."

"First time I've attended and found the event very useful."

"I thought the list of workshops relevant and the event generally had a good buzz."

"Coffee was poor and expensive, but the event itself was excellent."

Suggestions for Future Meet the Buyer Events

Survey respondents were asked to suggest exhibitors that they would like to see at future Meet the Buyer events. There were many different suggestions as to organisations and industries they would like to see as future exhibitors, including:

- More/all local authorities, private sector organisations and NHS health boards
- Housing associations
- Prison service
- Energy suppliers and Scottish Power
- Universities/colleges
- Ministry of Defence
- Construction companies
- Supermarkets
- Pharmaceutical industry and chemical sector

Exhibitor Experience

In all, 66 respondents completed a separate survey on Meet the Buyer for exhibitors. A whopping 91% of exhibitors rated the overall event experience as excellent or good, and 100% of exhibitors would recommend exhibiting at Meet the Buyer to other organisations. Some comments included:

“We were able to speak to lots of SMEs and provide them with information on our up-coming tenders and quick quotes. We were able to identify several potential suppliers for an urgent quick quote which will be issued in a few weeks. We have received some information about new products or services which may be of interest and have passed this information onto the relevant departments.”

“It met my objective to liaise with suppliers to inform them of the procurement processes within the council and answer any queries or concerns they may have had.”

“Suppliers I talked to were told about the councils I work for and how to get work or how to see if there might be work coming up. Any innovative products were pitched and I was able to feed that back to the services.”

Social Media Analytics

The Supplier Development Programme created the hashtag: #MeetTheBuyer2019 to promote the event. It was utilised by a number of buyers and suppliers, as well as SDP, in the lead up to the event.

On the 12th and 13th November 2019, SDP posted tweets using this hashtag as well as other tweets promoting the event. There was a total of 156 tweets over these two days.

Twitter analytics indicate that these 156 tweets resulted in:

- 42,952 impressions;
- 958 engagements;
- 142 likes;
- 49 retweets;
- 73 user profile clicks;
- 69 URL clicks; and
- 32 hashtag clicks.



Impressions

times people saw this Tweet on Twitter

2,022

Total engagements

times people interacted with this Tweet

15

Outcomes of Meet the Buyer 2019

Key learning/development targets from the 2018 Meet the Buyer report included:

Larger venue provided to accommodate the number of suppliers wishing to attend:

- Hampden was a larger venue than Murrayfield (2018 venue), although an even larger venue will be needed for attendees.
- Meet the Buyer 2020 is being held at the EICC which is significantly larger than both of these venues.

Provide further seating and networking areas and improve catering available:

- The catering was criticised by several survey respondents as being of poor quality.
- This is out with the control of the Supplier Development Programme but was included in the debriefing information given to the venue.

Provide further training to those exhibitors identified as not having enough detail on their upcoming contract opportunities:

- An exhibitor pack detailing information on how to prepare for Meet the Buyer is being considered for Meet the Buyer 2020.

Send invites to all exhibitors suggested by survey respondents:

- Exhibition invitations were sent to more than 200 potential buyers and contractors with supply chains in advance of Meet the Buyer 2019.

Next Steps

Key developments/targets that have been identified by SDP for Meet the Buyer 2020 are:

- Standardise supplier evaluation survey questions between Meet the Buyer and Meet the Buyer North 2020, and consider a follow up survey with suppliers after the initial survey to measure the event's potential impact upon bidding success rates
- Work with the venue to arrange improved catering and facilities at the event
- Continue to invite new/wider range of exhibitors, on top of traditional exhibitors
- Implement a back-up for electronic registration at future events