



MEET THE BUYER



Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event
Final Report
2 June 2020 • #MeetTheBuyer2020

Meet the Buyer 2020

Due to restrictions imposed by the Scottish Government's response to the COVID-19 crisis, the physical Meet the Buyer event was postponed from 2 June 2020 to 8 June 2021. However, on 2 June, the Supplier Development Programme (SDP) organised virtual activities to mark the occasion of what would have been the 12th annual Meet the Buyer event.

SDP carried out a "Twitter Takeover" of its account with buyers from Fife Council, East Renfrewshire Council, South Ayrshire Council and Scottish Government Procurement. This social media activity was complemented by two free SDP tender training webinars on Dynamic Purchasing Systems and Frameworks with Scotland Excel, and a "how-to" interactive session on using Public Contracts Scotland, the national public sector tender portal for Scotland.

Never billed as a replacement for a physical Meet the Buyer event, the virtual activities aimed to demonstrate an innovative approach to communicate with suppliers and contribute to open, connected and transparent procurement practices in Scotland's public sector during the on-going restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Suppliers were encouraged to sign up to register interest in the overall event, as well as the two webinars, through a widespread promotional campaign in partnership with SDP's membership organisations and valued partners.

Pre-Event Communications

Due to the on-going, understandable higher priority of communications related to COVID-19, Public Contracts Scotland did not promote SDP's virtual event to registered suppliers on PCS as it historically has for face-to-face events in previous years. Additionally, e-mailings to registered suppliers on the SDP website were much more limited than usual, due to arrangements around furloughed and out-of-office staff.

In light of the limitations on SDP's normal routes of communication with suppliers to raise awareness, SDP Scotland promoted the event in a limited paid campaign to SME business owners through Facebook and Twitter on 1 June. In total, 123 suppliers pre-registered interest on the SDP website for the Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event.

Twitter Takeover - #MeetTheBuyer2020

A Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event "Twitter Takeover" was designed to allow the SDP Twitter account to be put in the hands of specified public sector buyers for a specified amount of time. This activity aimed to prompt discussion about upcoming contracts and frameworks in the public sector, in lieu of a face-to-face event. Local authorities were approached by SDP Scotland on a voluntary basis to participate for one hour of time on 2 June, with the overall aims to increase awareness of the Supplier Development Programme, connections with key partnership organisations,

and open up SDP's social media presence to new audiences while engaging current followers.

Volunteering in advance at SDP's request, [Fife Council](#), [East Renfrewshire Council](#), [South Ayrshire Council](#) provided blogs to appear on the SDP Scotland website to complement their involvement in the Twitter Takeover. [Scottish Government](#)'s participation was confirmed by SDP Scotland in advance and also provided a blog. In addition, SDP membership organisations including [Falkirk Council](#) (and Business Gateway Falkirk), [Scottish Procurement Alliance](#), [Wheatley Group](#), [Moray Council](#), [Aberdeen City Council](#), [Aberdeenshire Council](#), and [Highland Council](#) were also promoted by SDP Scotland during the virtual event on Twitter. [Scotland Excel](#), as a valued headline partner of Meet the Buyer, participated as a panellist in the morning webinar and was also promoted by SDP Scotland throughout the day on Twitter.

Overall Analytics

Over the course of the working day on 2 June 2020, 162 tweets were sent from the SDP Scotland Twitter during the Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event by five public sector organisations. The tweets collectively earned 55,228 impressions (the number of times users saw a Tweet on Twitter) and 1,591 engagements (total number of times a user interacted with a Tweet). The tweets earned 76 retweets, 285 likes and 46 replies. The SDP Scotland Twitter account gained 25 new followers. In total, the 162 tweets collectively resulted in 165 user profile clicks, 265 URL clicks, and 49 hashtag clicks. Finally, the tweets during the Twitter Takeover resulted in users expanding tweets for more detail 481 times with 224 views of the media images attached to the tweets.

Overall, including the hour of the Twitter Takeover that SDP Scotland participated in, SDP Scotland supported the Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event with 70 total tweets. The tweets earned 29,729 impressions (the number of times users saw a Tweet on Twitter) and 636 engagements (total number of times a user interacted with a Tweet). Collectively, SDP Scotland's 70 tweets earned 46 retweets, 124 likes and 15 replies.

Fife Council - 10:00am - 11:00 am

After initial tweets from the Supplier Development Programme, Fife Council opened the Twitter Takeover on the topic, "Fife Means Business: How to Engage with [Fife Council](#) and Explore Community Benefits." During one hour, Fife Council sent 31 tweets from the SDP Scotland Twitter account during Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event. The tweets earned 10,664 impressions (the number of times users saw a Tweet on Twitter) and 301 engagements (total number of times a user interacted with a Tweet). Fife Council's tweets earned nine retweets, 58 likes and 10 replies.

The [full round-up of Fife Council's time](#) on the SDP Scotland's Twitter account can be viewed in an alternative format on the SDP website. This is complemented by a [blog from Fife Council](#).

East Renfrewshire Council - 11:00am - 12:00 noon

Next, East Renfrewshire Council continued the Twitter Takeover of SDP Scotland's account on the topic, "Progressing the Procurement Pipeline and Future Opportunities with [East Renfrewshire Council](#)." During one hour, East Renfrewshire Council sent 23 tweets from the SDP Scotland Twitter account as part of the Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event. The tweets earned 4,863 impressions (the number of times users saw a Tweet on Twitter) and 188 engagements (total number of times a user interacted with a Tweet). East Renfrewshire Council's tweets earned one retweet, 41 likes and 10 replies.

The [full round-up of East Renfrewshire Council's time](#) on the SDP Scotland's Twitter account can be viewed in an alternative format on the SDP website. This is complemented by a [blog from East Renfrewshire Council](#).

South Ayrshire Council - 12:00 noon - 1:00 pm

South Ayrshire Council joined the Twitter Takeover on the topic, "Exploring Quick Quotes with [South Ayrshire Council](#)." During one hour of the Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event, South Ayrshire Council sent 19 tweets from the SDP Scotland Twitter account. The tweets earned 4,643 impressions (the number of times users saw a Tweet on Twitter) and 276 engagements (total number of times a user interacted with a Tweet). South Ayrshire Council's tweets earned five retweets, 33 likes and eight replies.

The [full round-up of South Ayrshire Council's time](#) on the SDP Scotland's Twitter account can be viewed in an alternative format on the SDP website. This is complemented by a [blog from South Ayrshire Council](#).

Scottish Government Procurement - 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Scottish Government joined the Twitter Takeover on the topic, "Construction and SMEs with [Scottish Government](#)." During one hour, the Scottish Government sent 19 tweets from the SDP Scotland Twitter account during the Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event. The tweets earned 5,328 impressions (the number of times users saw a Tweet on Twitter) and 187 engagements (total number of times a user interacted with a Tweet). The Scottish Government's tweets earned 15 retweets, 28 likes and three replies.

The [full round-up of the Scottish Government's time](#) on the SDP Scotland's Twitter account can be viewed in an alternative format on the SDP website. This is complemented by a [blog from Scottish Government Procurement](#).

Supplier Development Programme - 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

The Supplier Development Programme finished the Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event on the topic, "Finding Contract Opportunities and Other Practical Tips with [SDP Scotland](#)." During this one hour, SDP Scotland sent 44 tweets (a total of 70 tweets were sent by SDP over the full day on 2 June). The 44 tweets earned 11,963 impressions (the number of times users saw a Tweet on Twitter) and 203 engagements (total number of times a user interacted with a Tweet). SDP Scotland's tweets earned 21 retweets, 42 likes and 12 replies.

Webinar Outcomes

In total, 75 suppliers pre-registered to attend [Frameworks & Dynamic Purchasing Systems \(DPS\)](#) in the morning, and 57 suppliers pre-registered to attend [Public Contracts Scotland \(PCS\): What would you like to know?](#) in the afternoon on 2 June, as part of SDP's Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event activities.

In total, 96 suppliers from SMEs as well as larger businesses attended the two webinars. The morning session was delivered to 54 suppliers from 46 unique businesses, and the afternoon session was delivered to a further 42 suppliers from 36 unique businesses.

Supplier Questions

The delegates that attended asked pertinent questions during each webinar.

Examples from the morning training included:

- "Is there a listing anywhere of the end/refresh dates for frameworks so that bidders can forward plan? This changes it from a reactive to proactive process."
- "If an opportunity is aborted, does this affect the supplier?"
- "We supply services such as social research, cross-cultural training, and management consultancy (and training) around climate change and related challenges. So far I haven't seen any mention in the framework/DPS discussion of these kinds of services. Are these generally handled outside frameworks?"
- "Does Scotland Excel differ significantly from other procurement groups, e.g. PFH or SPA?"
- "Can IT hardware be purchased via categories C1 and C?"

Examples of questions asked during the afternoon training included:

- "I'm registered on PCS, is it a separate registration for quick quotes?"
- "Is there a quick way to search the Lots you may be able to supply when registering?"
- "What does PCS-T stand for again? - Sorry, just new to this."
- "Are there any opportunities made available specifically to social enterprises?"
- "What is a 'Call Off'?"

Supplier Feedback

Examples of feedback received from the delegates demonstrate that the whole experience was extremely beneficial:

- “All the presenters were remarkably fluent and comfortable with the online format and the presentation tools. It puts many of my academic colleagues to shame!”
- “The presenters managed the balance between slides and voice well — I know this is sort of a minimum standard, but it's refreshing to see it done well.”
- “For the first virtual conference we attended, let me say I was blown away by how smoothly it went! Content was very informative for me (as I'm not as familiar with the sales side of my business) and was interesting to be part of.”
- “The Twitter Takeover was great as we got to interact with these councils directly on where to find specific resources to help us tender prepare our tenders better.”

Additional feedback was sought from suppliers about their webinar experience. In total, 79% of respondents to SDP's webinar training surveys said that they were more likely to bid for future public sector contracts after attending SDP training during the virtual Meet the Buyer event. Additionally, 97% rated both the SDP trainer and the training content as Excellent or Good.

An overall survey was promoted to suppliers, which was completed by eight respondents, 100% of which were from sole traders, micro, small, or medium sized businesses already registered with SDP. Half – 50% - of respondents participated by following the hashtag #MeetTheBuyer2020, while the other half participated in one or more Twitter activities directly during the day. While one respondent found Twitter to be too complicated to follow, another commented, “I think it was quite innovative, considering the circumstances.”

In total, 88% of respondents thought that the Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event demonstrated that public sector procurement is open and transparent, despite the challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Buyer Feedback

A survey was circulated to SDP membership organisations after the conclusion of the virtual event. Four responses in total were received, which reflects an expected diminished capacity of participation from buying organisations during COVID-19. However, the feedback was highly positive. 100% of buyers rated pre-event communication and the promotional toolkit as Excellent, and the overall experience as Excellent or Good.

Two case studies related to the Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event were published on the SDP website in relation to South Ayrshire Council and a new supplier.