

How Do You Find Government Work?

One of the most common questions that was being hinted at in the meeting was, "How do I find government contracts?"

The simple answer is that opportunities are easier to find than ever before. The challenge is knowing where to look, understanding how buyers describe their requirements, and engaging with the market before a tender is published.

Finding government work should not be viewed as a search activity; it should be viewed as a business development activity.

Understand How Buyers Describe Requirements

The first step is understanding how public sector organisations classify the goods and services they buy.

Contracting authorities use Common Procurement Vocabulary (CPV) codes and other classifications when publishing procurement notices through the Central Digital Platform. These classifications help suppliers identify opportunities that match their capabilities.

Many suppliers make the mistake of selecting only the most obvious classifications. For example, a learning and development provider may register under training services but miss opportunities published under consultancy, organisational development, project delivery, transformation or change management classifications.

Successful suppliers regularly review the classifications used by their customers, competitors and target sectors to ensure they are monitoring the right opportunities.

Use the Central Digital Platform

The Central Digital Platform is becoming the primary location for the publication of procurement notices under the Procurement Act for all government departments.

Suppliers should ensure they:

- Register and maintain accurate organisational information.
- Review relevant classifications and alerts.
- Monitor pipeline information and notices regularly.
- Keep key policies, certifications and organisational information up to date.

However, registration alone will not generate opportunities. The most successful suppliers combine platform monitoring with active market engagement and relationship building.

The MOD representative mentioned the Defence Portal and this is important but all procurement is also on the CDP.

Look Beyond Today's Tender

Many suppliers focus exclusively on contracts that are currently open for competition.

The most successful organisations look much further ahead and monitor:

- Planned procurements.
- Procurement pipelines.
- Framework and Dynamic Market refresh opportunities.
- Contract award notices.
- Preliminary Market Engagement activities.

This allows suppliers to prepare capability statements, partnerships, resources and evidence long before a procurement formally begins.

Engage Early Through Preliminary Market Engagement

Under Section 16 of the Procurement Act, contracting authorities may undertake Preliminary Market Engagement (PME) before commencing a procurement.

PME allows buyers to better understand market capability, test assumptions and explore potential delivery models before finalising their requirements.

For suppliers, these activities provide valuable opportunities to:

- Understand emerging requirements.
- Demonstrate capability and innovation.
- Build awareness with potential customers.
- Identify future opportunities before they reach the market.
- Prepare for upcoming competitions.

Organisations that participate effectively in market engagement activities are often better positioned when the procurement is eventually launched.

As part of ongoing work with suppliers and contracting authorities, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce is currently conducting a survey examining how contracting authorities within the defence sector are undertaking Preliminary Market Engagement activities. The survey seeks to identify emerging good practice, understand supplier experiences and provide insight into how the market is evolving under the Procurement Act.

The results will help suppliers better understand how and where they can engage with defence customers before formal procurements are published.

Follow the Money

One of the most overlooked methods of finding government work is tracking who is winning contracts.

Every contract award creates opportunities beyond the prime contractor.

By monitoring contract awards, suppliers can identify:

- Prime contractors entering new markets.
- Organisations expanding delivery capacity.
- Existing suppliers seeking specialist support.
- Emerging supply chain opportunities.

Many SMEs secure significant public sector revenue without ever holding a direct government contract. Instead, they become trusted delivery partners within established supply chains.

Understanding who is winning contracts can therefore be just as valuable as identifying opportunities that are yet to be published.

Recognising the importance of this approach, our Thames Valley supplier network meeting in October will focus specifically on understanding prime contractors, supply chain engagement and practical approaches to positioning your organisation within major government programmes.

Build Relationships Before the Competition Starts

Government procurement is increasingly transparent, but relationships still matter.

The strongest suppliers:

- Attend supplier engagement events.
- Participate in market engagement exercises.
- Monitor pipeline publications.
- Build relationships with prime contractors.
- Develop partnerships with complementary suppliers.
- Invest in understanding customer challenges.

By the time a procurement is published, many of the key strategic decisions have already been made. Suppliers who engage early are often better prepared to compete effectively.

Get Procurement Ready

Finding opportunities is only one part of the journey.

Suppliers must also be able to demonstrate the capability, experience, policies, certifications and governance arrangements expected by public sector buyers.

This is where Explosive Learning Solutions' Fit 4 Gov programme can help.

Fit 4 Gov supports organisations to:

- Understand the public sector marketplace.

- Identify suitable opportunities.
- Prepare for supplier selection requirements.
- Strengthen bidding capability.
- Develop public sector credentials.
- Position themselves effectively for government and defence opportunities.

The programme is designed to help suppliers move from simply finding opportunities to becoming genuinely ready to win them.

The Key Message

Government opportunities are rarely hidden.

The organisations that succeed are those that understand how buyers classify requirements, monitor the Central Digital Platform, engage in Preliminary Market Engagement activities, track contract awards, build relationships with prime contractors and prepare well before a tender is published.