

Procurement Act 2023 Frameworks Explained for Suppliers

Understanding Frameworks Through a Football Squad

Introduction

The Procurement Act 2023 introduces several commercial arrangements that allow public sector buyers to purchase goods, services and works without running a full procurement every time.

For suppliers, understanding these arrangements is critical. The route to winning public contracts increasingly starts with securing a place on a framework, dynamic market or similar commercial vehicle.

A useful way to understand these arrangements is to think about a football squad.

Getting onto a framework is often like being selected for the squad. Winning work is like being selected for the starting eleven.

Being in the squad improves your chances of playing, but it does not guarantee you will step onto the pitch.

Traditional Closed Framework

The Fixed Squad

Football Analogy

The manager names a 25-player squad at the start of the season.

Once the transfer window closes, nobody else can join.

The players in the squad compete for matchday selection throughout the season.

How It Works

The authority runs a competition and appoints suppliers to the framework. They get to choose how big the squad is.

Once established:

- No new suppliers can normally join.
- Suppliers remain on the framework for its duration.
- Call-off contracts are awarded from the framework.

Who Might Operate One?

- Central government departments
- Local authorities
- NHS bodies
- Purchasing consortia
- Framework providers

What Suppliers Need To Do

- Submit a successful tender before the framework closes.
- Meet all selection and award requirements.
- Demonstrate capability and capacity.

Things To Consider

- ✓ Missing the tender may mean waiting several years for another opportunity.
- ✓ Relationships and performance on call-offs become important once appointed.
- ✓ Framework appointment does not guarantee revenue.

Open Framework

The Squad With Transfer Windows

Football Analogy

The squad starts the season with selected players.

However, transfer windows open periodically, allowing new players to join the squad.

Existing players remain in place but must continue competing for selection.

How It Works

The Procurement Act introduces Open Frameworks.

These can:

- Last up to eight years.
- Be reopened at defined intervals.
- Allow new suppliers to compete for admission.

Who Might Operate One?

- Large purchasing organisations

- National frameworks
- Public buying organisations seeking long-term flexibility

What Suppliers Need To Do

- Monitor reopening opportunities.
- Submit evidence against the published criteria.
- Compete alongside existing and new suppliers.

Things To Consider

✓ Missing the initial opportunity is not necessarily fatal.

✓ Future admission points may be available.

✓ Strong preparation is needed before each reopening.

Dynamic Market

The Always Open Squad

Football Analogy

Imagine a football club that is always scouting.

Players can trial for the squad at any time.

If they meet the required standard, they can join immediately.

How It Works

Dynamic Markets remain open throughout their life.

New suppliers can apply whenever they choose.

Buyers can then run competitions amongst suppliers who have been admitted.

Who Might Operate One?

- Local authorities
- Housing associations
- NHS organisations
- Central government
- Purchasing consortia

Particularly where markets change quickly.

What Suppliers Need To Do

- Apply when ready.
- Meet the admission criteria.
- Maintain compliance.

Things To Consider

- ✓ Entry opportunities are continuous.
- ✓ Competition remains constant.
- ✓ Supplier information must be kept up to date.

Light Touch Frameworks

The Community Team

Football Analogy

The club is building a squad to support the local community.

The focus is not just on technical ability.

The manager also values relationships, understanding of local needs, safeguarding and social impact.

The squad may need flexibility to bring in additional players as community needs evolve.

How It Works

Used for certain social, health, education and community services.

Authorities have greater flexibility in designing procurement approaches.

Some may choose to create "Flexible Frameworks" that can reopen to admit new suppliers.

Who Might Operate One?

- Local authorities
- NHS bodies
- Integrated Care Boards
- Education providers
- Social care commissioners

What Suppliers Need To Do

- Demonstrate service quality.
- Show experience working with vulnerable groups.
- Evidence safeguarding and governance arrangements.
- Meet any admission requirements.

Things To Consider

- ✓ Quality often outweighs price.
- ✓ Social value can be significant.
- ✓ Local delivery capability may be important.
- ✓ Frameworks may reopen if designed to do so.

Being in the Squad Doesn't Mean You Play

One of the biggest misunderstandings among suppliers is that framework appointment guarantees work.

It rarely does.

In football terms:

- The framework is the squad.
- The call-off competition is match selection.
- The contract award is getting onto the pitch.

Suppliers should therefore:

- Continue marketing to buyers.
- Continue to attend market engagement activities.
- Build relationships.
- Understand customer needs.
- Maintain performance and compliance.

Key Questions Every Supplier Should Ask

Before pursuing any framework:

1. Who is likely to buy through it?
2. How much spend is expected?
3. How are call-offs awarded?
4. Is direct award permitted?
5. Can new suppliers join later?
6. How much competition will there be?
7. What are the costs of participation?

8. Is the framework aligned to our growth strategy?

Final Whistle

The Procurement Act 2023 creates more routes into public sector markets than ever before.

Some arrangements operate like a fixed squad. Others allow new players to join throughout the season.

The key for suppliers is understanding:

- Which squad they are trying to join.
- How selection works.
- What they need to do to stay competitive once admitted.

Need Further Support?

Explosive Learning Solutions provides practical training, supplier briefings and consultancy support on:

- The Procurement Act 2023
- Frameworks and Dynamic Markets
- Bid and tender preparation
- Contract management
- Supplier readiness reviews

Whether you are new to public sector procurement or looking to strengthen your competitive position, we can help your team understand the rules of the game and improve your chances of making the starting eleven.

Explosive Learning Solutions – Turning procurement knowledge into competitive advantage.